



Class

252Q

Book

W117

General Theological Seminary Library

Chelsea Square, New York


*From the Library of*

REVEREND AUGUSTUS VALLETTE CLARKSON

G. T. S. 1853



2.00 net  
f. f.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2025



BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD !



# BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!

A SERIES

OF DISCOURSES TRACING THROUGH  
SCRIPTURE THE EVOLUTION AND CORO-  
NATION OF THE LAMB. By RUTHERFORD  
WADDELL, M.A., D.D., Dunedin, New Zealand +

LONDON: HODDER AND

STOUGHTON ♣ ♣ ♣ 27

PATERNOSTER ROW 1903

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY

NEW YORK

252Q  
W 117

47140

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
LIBRARY  
ANN ARBOR

TO THE MEMBERS AND ADHERENTS  
PAST AND PRESENT  
OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, DUNEDIN,  
THIS VOLUME OF SERMONS, WHICH OWES  
SO MUCH TO THEIR UNVARYING KINDNESS,  
THROUGH A PASTORATE OF FOUR-AND-TWENTY YEARS,  
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.





## PREFACE

PLATO says, "Writing has this terrible disadvantage . . . You would fancy it full of the thoughts it speaks ; but if you ask it something you want to know about what is said, it looks at you always with the same old sign. And, once committed to writing, discourse is tossed about everywhere indiscriminately among those who understand and those to whom it is nought, and cannot select fit audience from the unfit. And when maltreated or unjustly abused, it always needs its father to help it ; for it has no power to help or defend itself."

That is a reason why any one might hesitate to commit transient thoughts, and particularly those that take the form of a sermon, to the cold permanency of print. For the sermon, more than any other form of writing, requires not only its father, but its original atmosphere and environment

for its interpretation. But with me there is a special reason why I should hesitate. These sermons were written without the remotest idea of publication. They were written amid the exactions of a somewhat busy pastorate, involving, in addition to the ordinary routine work of a large congregation, a literary lecture once a fortnight, and the editorship of *The Outlook*, a weekly paper of some forty pages—now the organ of the Presbyterian and Wesleyan Churches of New Zealand. And they are reproduced here practically as they were spoken. This may serve to explain, and perhaps excuse, the many faults, both in thought and expression, as well as the repetitions which will be found in them.

No one can be more conscious of their imperfections than I am myself. Why then do I publish them? I have only one excuse: it is by request. I would never have dreamt of doing it on my own motion. But a considerable number of those who heard them urged me to do so. Among these were some whose judgment I highly respected, and so I have been persuaded to consent to their publication.

The germ of these discourses is in Bushnell's sermon on "The Coronation of the Lamb." They are a development and expansion of the thought, "How a lamb becomes the Lamb; a very humble common name, the highest of all proper names; climbing up through long reaches of history into the throne of God itself."

There are, of course, many books and sermons on various aspects of the Lamb, but I do not know of any in which the subject is presented in its unity. That is what I seek to do in these discourses, and so far, perhaps, they may claim originality. For the rest, there is little in them that has not been said by others over and over again. From the nature of the subject this was almost inevitable. I had to go over ground trodden hard by the feet of multitudes of sowers. I have made use of their seed when it served my purpose, with, I trust, due acknowledgment. Emerson says of Chaucer that he was "a huge borrower. . . . He steals by this apology—that what he takes has no worth where he finds it, and the greatest where he leaves it."

It may be said, I suppose, that for the average

man of the average congregation the work of theological scholars lies hidden away in books which he will never read. The preacher's function is that of a sort of middleman, translating these for him into the current coin of religion. His apology is that what he takes has no worth for him where he finds it. His hope is that it has the greatest where he leaves it. In thus acknowledging in a general way my obligations to others, I desire to make special mention of my indebtedness to Dr. Robertson Nicoll's little book, "The Lamb of God." Like all that comes from Dr. Nicoll's pen, it has its own note of distinction. Though it only covers the Lamb in the Revelation, yet I owe very much to this impressive and beautiful little volume.

Just now the Colonies have a large place in the thought of Britain. It may interest some, perhaps, to know the sort of sermons to which they are subjected. These may be taken as a sample—neither better nor, it is hoped, worse than that which is supplied week by week from the average Colonial pulpit.

Living so far from England I have not had the



opportunity of reading the proof sheets. This duty has been very kindly undertaken for me by Rev. C. H. Irwin, M.A., editor of *The Leisure Hour*. Most gratefully do I here acknowledge his generous and laborious service.

And now with all their sins going before them to judgment, the sermons are committed to that larger public for which they were not originally intended, and to the forgiveness and, if it may be, the service of Him who inspired whatever of good is in them, in the humble hope—

“That not for heights of victory won,  
But those we sought to gain,  
Shall come our gracious Lord's ‘Well done,’  
And sweet effacing rain.”

ST. ANDREW'S MANSE,  
DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND.  
*December 25, 1902.*



# CONTENTS

	I	
		PAGE
INTRODUCTORY . . . . .		I
	II.	
THE FIRST STAGE IN THE EVOLUTION . . . . .		15
	III.	
THE FIRST OBJECT-LESSON . . . . .		28
	IV	
ANOTHER STAGE IN THE EVOLUTION : THE PASS- OVER . . . . .		41
	V.	
THE EVOLUTION THROUGH THE LEVITICAL RITUAL . . . . .		55

VI.		PAGE
THE EVOLUTION IN PROPHECY . . . . .		69
VII.		
THE DAWN . . . . .		81
VIII.		
"THE FULNESS OF TIME" . . . . .		95
IX.		
"BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!" . . . . .		107
X.		
THE SIN-BEARING LAMB . . . . .		121
XI.		
THE FORE-ORDAINED LAMB . . . . .		136
XII.		
"THE LAMB OPENING THE SEALED BOOKS" . . . . .		151

# CONTENTS

xv

## XIII.

	PAGE
THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE . . .	164

## XIV.

THE CORONATION SONG . . . . .	177
-------------------------------	-----

## XV.

ECHOES OF THE CORONATION SONG . . . . .	190
---	-----

## XVI.

THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION . . . . .	204
----------------------------------	-----

## XVII.

THE WRATH OF THE LAMB . . . . .	218
---------------------------------	-----

## XVIII.

THE WARRIOR LAMB . . . . .	233
----------------------------	-----

## XIX.

OVERCOMING THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB .	247
--	-----



## XX.

	PAGE
THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB . . .	261

## XXI.

THE LAMB AS A LAMP . . .	274
--------------------------	-----

## XXII.

"THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE" . . .	287
---------------------------------	-----

# I

## INTRODUCTORY

104  
THESE papers form a series of addresses on the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb, as outlined in the Bible. It is a profound subject. It touches life and thought at the deepest reaches. I need hardly say how the lamb and what the lamb stands for are woven like a crimson thread through all the web of Revelation. Without an understanding of the doctrine of the lamb it is impossible to have any adequate conception of the significance of the Bible, but with it we have a key to the deepest and most perplexing mysteries of God and of man. I propose therefore to try to get hold of this key, and to open with it those great doors through which we pass into the deep things of the human and the Divine.

Nothing is what it seems. Everything is a symbol. A symbol of what? A symbol of thought, and back through the thought to the thinker, to the life or personality out of whom that thought arose. The practical man says he will rest on facts. Well, what is a fact? Food, flowers, land, gold, iron, earth. Just so, but are these all? No, he soon discovers that these are not the only facts ; that they only veil other facts ; that he cannot rest in them, for they are all on the move. They are breaking up, dissolving, stealing away, changing into something else. They are not what they seem. Here, for instance, is matter—soil, clay, rock, &c. What can be more solid and substantial? Yet the chemist can blow it into gas, resolve it into invisible force. Look at this bar of iron. How hard and dead it appears ! Yet the man of science will prove to you that its particles are all in incessant motion. Faraday long ago predicted that these atoms, when we could weigh and look into them, would be found to be centres of force. In other words, the ultimate molecules of the universe would be simply forms of something as subtle as life, perhaps indeed life itself. Well, the development of science is making that more and more certain. Thus every fact has a double side. Every visible thing has a tangible

something and something which is intangible, which gives the thing a form, but cannot be said to belong to it. Like the spirit in the body, it is in it, but not of it. The carpenter stretches his string; it holds the pieces together. Put your ear to it; it sounds musical in the breeze. I see you sitting in the pews. I say I see you. Do I really? No, what I see is not you; it is only the symbol or covering or incarnation through which you manifest yourself, through which the soul, the life finds visible expression. So of everything else about us—the trees, the soil, the houses, the earth, the universe, they have this double side, this twofold significance. Well, that brings us in sight of our starting-point—the Lamb. It, too, falls under this general law. It, too, is a symbol. It has become a symbol and a synonym for the highest things. My object is to try to trace “how a lamb becomes *the* Lamb. How a humble, common name becomes the greatest of all proper names, climbing up through long reaches of history into the very Throne itself of God.”

To do this we must begin far back. This book, the Bible, takes us further back than any other. It is the story of the religious education of a small people. It must not be forgotten that this people—a branch of the Semitic race—was once as low

down in civilisation almost as any heathen tribe to-day. How low that was scholars have been unfolding for us. It is a strange history. It is a fascinating study. One of the greatest scholars of the nineteenth century, Professor Robertson Smith, has outlined it for us in "The Religion of the Semites." As you travel away back to the headwaters of the great race of humanity there is one fact that is never absent. It goes with you, no matter how far you penetrate: it is sacrifice. Sacrifice is common to all races in every stage of culture. There is no indication in the Bible that it was ordained by God. It came up naturally out of the needs of man. How did it emerge? The Bible opens with a picture of man in fellowship with God. At this stage sacrifice must have been present, but it was joy that was then its distinguishing feature. Adam was a derived being, a dependent being. All he was, and had, was the gift of his Creator. To take himself in his hands, as it were; to lift himself and all that he had up to God in gratitude, in thanksgiving, that was Adam's duty. It was also his joy. That was sacrifice at the first. There was no pain in its heart. It was a pleasure. It was the delight of life. Then came sin, and this phase of sacrifice disappeared. The light died out. There is a long



blank. When man emerges again to view, sacrifice is still there, but it is a new thing. It is no longer a joy. It is a constraint, it is a pain, it is a sorrow, it is a dread, it is a death.

We do not know definitely how it grew up, but custom and tradition and lingering practices hint it not obscurely to us. We shall get at it in this way. The unit of society is the family. Then families came together and formed clans. The clan developed into a tribe. Each tribe had its god, or gods. The tribe's conception of its god, when we first come on it, was that he shared a common life with man, and with animals, and with the vegetable world. The bond of life was a purely physical one. The god's life had the same needs as man's life. It required food and drink like them. In prosperous times, when things went well, the tribe was happy. They came with their goods to their gods. They desired to thank him for his favour, and to possess him by a share in their joys. Thus one of the earliest forms of sacrifice is the thank-offering. But times were not always prosperous. Fields failed; the tribe was stricken with sickness, it was crushed in war, it was decimated by famine. Adversities such as these were reckoned a sign of the god's displeasure. It was an indication that the common life had

been snapped and broken. How was it to be renewed? Only by participation in the common life which bound them together. That common life was present in plant and flowers and food. It was present also in the life of animals. But it was obvious that the life of an animal was a higher kind of life than the life of a tree or a flower, of a vegetable or a cereal. Hence animal offerings soon came to be considered more valuable as offerings than vegetables. But among the animals themselves some were evidently of a higher type of life than others. So we come upon a distinction emphasised in the ritual of the Hebrews : the distinction between clean and unclean animals. The unclean animals were those of a low and repugnant kind of life, the creeping and crawling sort. The clean animals were those that came nearest to man, those that he reared, and that were serviceable to him. Of these the chief were such as the ox and the sheep. So these two came to be accepted at the head of animals for sacrifice. But I am anticipating. This belongs to a later stage of the evolution.

Now the next question that emerged was this : The animals that were nearest of kin to the tribe and its god having been determined, how were they to unite the sundered life between them and

their god? In this way : the life of the animal, being of the same nature as their own life and the life of their god, if they could only get this life, consume a portion of it themselves, and offer another portion to their god, thus they believed that their god and they would be brought together again ; the broken and sundered life would be reunited ; and all would be well. But how were they to get the life of the animal? They could not help observing the significance of blood. When an animal or a man was struck down the loss of blood indicated a loss of life. Hence they concluded that there was, if not an identity, at any rate a subtle connection between the blood and the life. Well then, if they could only share with their god the blood, that would be equivalent to sharing the life, and so renewing the bond between them. So they killed the animal. They gave the god his share by pouring it upon his pillar or altar, and the tribe drank the remainder. By and by, however, this bloody draught became rather repulsive, so instead of drinking the blood, they sprinkled it on the worshipper, or ate the flesh of the victim. But as time went on a further evolution took place. Doubts began to grow as to the identity of life between the animal and the gods. Gradually the

gulf widened. Grave fears at length arose whether the sacred life were in truth carried by the blood of an animal, and whether, therefore, the customary sacrifices had power to retie that vital bond which transgression had broken. In this terrible perplexity what were they to do? Re-establish the broken link in some way they must. But how was that possible, except by common participation in the sacred life? From the obvious answer to this question they must at first have shrunk in dismay. For what is the obvious answer? The obvious answer is that it was man himself that carried the life most akin to the god, and the higher and fairer and stronger that human life the liker the divine. If, therefore, they killed such, they would certainly get possession of the sacred blood, and so cement once more the sundered relation between them and their god. When this first dawned on them it must have seemed dreadful. But in some great crisis of their history, when wife or children were perishing in the pestilence, or when tribesmen were being defeated and destroyed in war, the horror of the present suffering overcame the horror of nature. They offered a human sacrifice. Some chance or other may have brought success as a consequence. So the habit grew. Repetition dulled natural sensi-

bility, and, especially among superstitious races, human sacrifice became terribly common. Well now, this was something like the state of things when the first authentic glimmer of history dawned upon the world. These were the sentiments of the people out of whom emerged Abraham, Isaiah, and Christ.

Now, observe, at the heart of these crude and coarse notions regarding sacrifices there was a great truth hidden. What was it? It was this: community between a man and his God is only possible by participation in a common life. When that community is broken, as it is by sin, it can only be restored by God and man being brought together again through participation in a common life. The error of these early pagans was in supposing that this participation was given either by the slaughter of animals or of man. Now how was this great truth to be disentangled from the mass of crudities and cruelties in which it was embodied? That is a question which brings us to the sure historic starting-point of this Book. That starting-point is Abraham. God was preparing the world for the advent of His own Son. Out of this mass of heathenism and superstition Abraham is called, and the real education of the world takes a new and definite departure. We shall see in a

later lecture how Abraham was educated out of his belief that a human sacrifice could possibly be acceptable to God. We shall see how he was taught that the only sacrifice which God asks lies, not in an animal, nor a man, but in the human will. The story of Abraham offering up Isaac is the first rough draft of this. It is the great object-lesson in sacrifice set before that early world. But while Abraham grasped the truth, it was lost by his descendants. He grew to a family. The family became a tribe, the tribe a nation, and finally the nation emerges from the bondage of Egypt. But it emerges carrying with it Egyptian notions regarding sacrifice. What these were I have already indicated, for in their broad outlines the conception of sacrifice which involved the offerings of animals and human beings prevailed in Egypt as well as among the Semites, of which the Hebrew race is a branch. Well, then, the problem was to educate Israel into the truth about sin and sacrifice which their great founder, Abraham, had been taught in his offering of his son Isaac. It is a deep and difficult problem. The first stage of it starts the night before they left Egypt. It starts with the Passover, with the slain lamb, and the blood sprinkled on the door-posts. This slaying of animals and sprinkling of blood would be no

strange thing to Israel. It belonged to the ritual and the circle of thought with which they were more or less familiar in the surrounding nations. You have to run some distance with a runaway horse before you can stop him ; and God had to accommodate Himself to the superstitions of the time in order to lift Israel out of them, and make them a peculiar people for the saving of the world. This is the meaning of the ritual which emerges in the wilderness. It is the meaning of all those long and elaborate arrangements regarding the selection, the killing, the blood of animals which form so prominent a feature of Israel's religious life. For a long while the masses of the people continued to believe that the sacrifices somehow atoned for their sin ; that, in fact, they had only to pay a priesthood and keep their ritual elaborate and costly, and then they might live any sort of a life they liked. And over and over again you have the strange spectacle of the kings and the people living in wickedness, while yet the altar streamed with the blood of victims, and the ritual of religion was observed with pride and punctuality. They present us with what is a very common thing, the complete divorce between religion and ethics, between theology and practical life. There was a class of men who demonstrated the falsity and

fatality of all this, who penetrated to the heart of this sacrificial system. These we call the Prophets. Of these, the first and chief after Moses, was Samuel. He was followed by others, by men like Micah, and Amos, and Jeremiah. They asked themselves what connection the blood of bulls and goats had with ethical and spiritual life. It was impossible it could take away sin, or atone for it. They penetrated back to what the great founder of their race had been taught. They saw that the sacrifice which God desired was not sheep nor cattle, or animal life, but the human will, the surrender of man's life to God. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice," says Samuel. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit," says a later poet. "What doth God require of thee," says a prophet, "but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?" This is the note that begins to sound clearer and stranger as you travel down their history. It grows deeper and more real. It is the prelude of the great coming day. What the world needed was the presentation to it of a life thus perfectly surrendered to God. It had never seen such. It tried to express its own surrender in its animal sacrifices, but it had now discovered the futility of these. At last the spectacle was shown to it. At last the great



words, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," announced His advent. That which the Lamb in its sacrifice had dimly figured was taken up into Christ, was carried forward by Him to its last fulfilment. We are now, however, in an altogether new world of thought. But what a distance it is, what a long and wondrous evolution! We began with man seeking to propitiate God, to find a sacrifice acceptable to Him. We end by seeing God providing His own sacrifice. It is not, as at first, man's lamb for God. It is now God's Lamb for man. Our redemption takes issue, not out of what we offer to God, but out of what God offers to us; and He offers to us life in Christ, the Lamb of God. And still there is a sacrifice on our side. What is it? It is the willingness to suppress self, and accept this Divine offering. Everything still depends on that. Our life depends on it. Still is it true that, separated from God, we are separated from the source of true being. The way out of that separation is the way He has provided—Christ the Redeemer from sin and the bestower of life eternal. And that is the sacrifice now that we have to make, and our life depends, I say, on the making of it. It is because Christ made this sacrifice for us; it is because He gave Himself up, even to the death, the death of the

Cross, in willing obedience to His Father, and in supreme love to man ; it is because of this He sits on the throne of the universe to-day ; it is because of this all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth ; it is because of this that we, who realise its significance, and surrender to its power, join with the mighty multitude in singing—

“ Jesus is worthy to receive  
Honour and power Divine ;  
And blessings more than we can give,  
Be, Lord, for ever Thine.”

## II

### THE FIRST STAGE IN THE EVOLUTION

GENESIS IV. 1-4 ; HEBREWS XI. 4.

**I**N the Introduction I tried to give a general survey of the whole field. I sought to sketch the origin and growth of sacrifice, how man came to offer animals to the Deity, how gross were the ideas entertained among the people of whom Christ came by the flesh. I said that the problem of the Divine education of the race was to disentangle the true ideas of sacrifice from the bloody rituals in which it was embedded in early ages ; to make the lamb from the hillside and the bleeding altars the symbol of the Lamb of God. That is the idea of the development of which this book is a history. That is the problem which I have set myself to interpret. Human investiga-

tion of this subject is brought up at the Deluge. It swept the earth clear not only of life, but of life's written records. If we accept the Bible as authentic history, it carries us back into the ages prior to the Flood, right back, in fact, to the very starting-point of human life. Of course other nations, in fact almost all nations, have their stories of life anterior to the Deluge, and they no doubt represent more or less truthfully the facts. If any one says that these early stories of Genesis are like the others, myths, that does not affect in the slightest the essential truths they contain. The parable of the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan is not true in the sense that ordinary history is true. They are only true in the sphere of the soul, in the inner regions of human nature; and so it is possible to regard these early stories as Divine allegories, and still hold the great truths that lie in the heart of them. One of these truths is sacrifice. This fourth chapter of Genesis gives us the earliest account in the world of sacrifice. Here is the first rude sketch of that great principle which God has woven into the Bible and the human conscience, and which culminates in Christ.

When the artist begins to paint a picture by a few swift strokes of his brush he develops the broad outline. These early strokes form the

basis. They really do more to develop the portrait than all the rest which follow. Let us study this rough draught of the Divine idea of sacrifice. We shall find in it, I think, a wonderful prophecy of what was to come. Here are two kinds of offerings made to God. One is vegetable, and one is animal, one is acceptable to God, one is not. God sets His seal of approbation on one form of sacrifice, He rejects the other. What is the reason? The writer of the Hebrews explains it. He says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable (that is a fuller and more complete sacrifice) than Cain." There you strike on the first great principle of sacrifice. The value of the offering depends not on the character of the offering itself. It depends on the character of the offerer. It is not the sacrifice, it is the man who makes it that gives it efficacy with God. Now that is a very simple thing to us. But long ago it was a revolutionary thought. As far back as we can trace sacrifice, man's ideas about it were something like this: Its efficacy depended on its costliness. Hence was reached, as we saw in the previous chapter, the terrible thought that the human life, being the highest and costliest of all, would therefore be most acceptable to God. Now when you turn into the Bible, you find this reversed everywhere. Sacrifice

is made effective, not by the offering but by the offerer. It took Israel ages before this lesson was burnt into her conscience. She was surrounded by nations that believed and practised the opposite. These nations sought to placate their gods by the number and value of their gifts, while their own moral character was steeped in the vilest immoralities. Israel was often tempted into similar conduct. Over and over again Israel had to be taught that mercy and obedience are what make the sacrifices acceptable to Jehovah. Without moral character even the costliest are an abomination. One of the earliest historic instances of this teaching is the answer which Micah represents Balaam as giving to Balak. The Moabitish king desires to know how he shall please Jehovah and win Him to his side. "Will it be with thousands of burnt-offerings and rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul." In other words, Can I win the Divine life or favour by increasing this number or the preciousness of animals or human victims? The reply put into the mouth of the prophet is, "No. God's favour is not won thus. It depends on yourself, on your own heart and moral character. What doth the Lord require of thee but to love mercy, do justly, and walk humbly with thy God?" So in

## THE FIRST STAGE IN THE EVOLUTION 19

many other passages. Here, then, in this first rough draught of sacrifice we get one of its essential principles. It depends for its efficacy on moral disposition. It depends on submission to the will of God. If it were presented by those who had love neither for God nor man, but who only desired to secure themselves in a life of self-pleasing, then the ritual and the offering, and everything connected with it, no matter how gorgeous, or costly, became an abomination to God. And that is a truth we cannot afford to forget, even at this hour. The value of our religious worship and work is determined by this principle. We may sing, and praise, and pray, and worship, and work, but everything depends not on the frequency or grandeur or costliness of these things. It depends on the heart and soul out of which they issue.

But now let us go back again to the ancient picture. The first principle is that the value of the sacrifice is formed by the character of the person. Now the writer of the Hebrews says it was the faith of Abel that gave efficacy to his offerings. What is the quality or content of this faith? Here we touch the nerve of the problem. It is obvious that it must have been something more than faith merely in the existence of God, or

gratitude for His bounty, or belief in His omnipotence, for Cain had this faith equally with Abel. His offering was the expression of it. In what then did the quality of Abel's faith differ from or exceed that of Cain? I think we shall find the answer to that in the character of the offering. Abel's offering was an animal, most likely a sheep or a lamb. Let us consider that for a minute. Death is familiar enough to us. The death of animals by the hundred and the thousand is an hourly occurrence. But in that early world it was not so. In Paradise, in the Golden Age of man, man was a vegetarian. He might eat of every manner of fruit and plant, but his right to food did not include apparently the right to kill and eat animals. That right was only given after the Fall. It is first clearly announced at the Deluge. Therefore, we may fairly presume that the killing of an animal, even for food, must have seemed an abhorrent act, an act of cruelty. There is something so mysterious about dumb life. Hardened as we have been by countless ages of slaughter, yet few can ever look at the death struggle of an animal without a certain awe. Our greatest poetic naturalist, who was not too tender to use a gun, Richard Jefferies, writes thus of the hare. After speaking of her handsomeness, her lithe and lissome



movement, and the wonderful shadowing of her brown coat, he says, "Even in the excitement of sport, regret cannot but be felt at the sight of those few drops of blood about the mouth which indicate that all this beautiful workmanship must now cease to be." And John Ruskin says more generally, "There is in every animal's eye a dim image of humanity, a flash of strange light through which their life looks out and up to our great mystery of command over them, and claims the fellowship of the creature, if not of the soul." That is so.

Even in spite of the hardening produced in our nature by centuries of slaughter and eating of the animal creation, the mysteries of life and death touch us still. But now observe : In this ancient story here you are away back in a world where no such custom prevailed. You are dealing with human life that has not yet seen death, at least human death. You have to do with an age in which human life and the animal touched each other in a near kinship, unbroken as yet by the curse ; and with men to whom had been given no Divine permission to slay and eat. Now my point is this : How did Abel venture upon killing an animal, and this animal one of his own domestic rearing ? How would he dare to destroy that

mysterious creature which appealed so much to his own, which lived in bonds of friendship with him, and over which as yet no Divine permission gave him rights of food as it did over the vegetable world? Moreover, how could he come to think that the destruction of such life could be acceptable to its creator? It is not simply that he killed the animal for his own necessities, for food, but that he killed it as a religious offering, as something that would be acceptable to God. In my judgment there is no answer to these questions, except on the assumption that God had revealed this method of offering as the method on which He set His approbation. We know as a matter of fact that He did this in later times. The whole ritual of Israel revolves round sacrifices of this kind. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that in some way not made known to us the parents and children of the first family had Divine direction on the matter. I say it is reasonable, for we find God in after times giving and directing the method of sacrifices and of approach to Him. It is in the childhood of the race that man most needed Divine instruction as to the way back into God's favour and peace, and it is impossible to think that God should not have revealed it. I conclude, therefore, that in the home of Cain and Abel there had been

given revelation of the true idea of offering. Their parents could not have forgotten that they had sinned, and all that they had lost by sin. The sinner, when he is really conscious of his sin, feels his guilt. He comes to realise the truth that its wages are death. He cannot approach into God's presence with a mere joyous offering, only the produce of the earth. He feels instinctively that there is a shadow between him and God, a shadow that cannot be scattered by the laughing flowers and fruits of a rejoicing nature. It is significant that we read that after Adam's sin it is said God made them skins of animals. Scholars have generally recognised in this a certain symbolism ; and it may be that here lies the germ of that revelation of sacrifice which found its expression in the offering of Abel. If that be so, and it seems to be quite reasonable, then we can understand how it is that Abel offers a completer, a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Both the brothers had faith in God—faith in His bounty, in His power, in the need of recognising Him as such, and offering Him thanksgiving. But Abel's faith went further. It embraced God's own way of approach to Him, for we have seen that there is every reason to believe that God had in some manner revealed this method of approach to Him

through animal sacrifice as the one specially acceptable to Him, as the one which would best foreshadow the Great Supreme Sacrifice that He was going to prepare for the world. This was the distinguishing character of Abel's faith. It took God at His word. It threw itself out upon God's revealed will, and trusted Him accordingly. Hence it was a more excellent and more complete sacrifice, a more perfect faith than Cain's. Cain was a child of reason and of nature. He acted as if God had not spoken, as if He had not revealed the manner in which He desired man to draw near to Him. This is confirmed by an interpretation which some scholars put upon the saying which God is represented as addressing to Cain later on, "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." The word "sin" there literally meant sin-offering. It is often used elsewhere in that sense. So that the statement means, "If thou doest not well, lo, there now lieth at thy very door a lamb, by offering which for sin thou mayest suitably express thy contrition and obtain forgiveness."

Now, we may find a parallel to this difference between the faith of Cain and Abel in the attitude which men to-day assume towards Christ. Whatever or however God may have revealed Himself to Adam and Eve and their descendants in that

early world, there can be no doubt of how He has done it for us. He has revealed Himself in Christ. Christ is the Word of God, and the way to the Father. Well now, men may assume two attitudes towards Christ and His revelation. They may refuse to accept Him on His own terms. They may only take of His truth just what suits themselves, what commends itself to their prudence, or their pleasure, or their reason. It is obvious that is neither faith nor obedience, for the essence of faith is trust in another when you cannot see where that other is leading you, and the essence of obedience is surrender of the will to another, not because you recognise either the wisdom or the rationality of what is commanded, but because of the authority which the other has a right to in our life. Well, that is one attitude which men and women assume towards Christ. They accept Him just as far as He commends Himself to their judgment and their desire. But that is not saving faith, that is not the offering which God can accept, for it is not surrender to God at all. It is only surrender to our own wish and wisdom. That is the faith of Cain.

But there is another attitude, there is another sort of faith. This is the faith that gives itself over absolutely to Christ. It gives itself over as

the patient gives himself over to a doctor. It comes to have no will or wish of its own. It says, "Lord, I do not know whither Thou wilt lead, but I do not care, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest; I commit myself to Thee as a child to a mother. I cease to have a desire or a doing apart from what Thou dost counsel and command, I take Thee wholly at Thy word, let come what may."

"... Though mind and brain  
Wither and are in vain  
And thought a pain;

Though sorrow, like a thief,  
Follow to rob belief  
And faith be grief;

Though my obedience show  
No fruit I here may know  
Save utter woe;

Though health and strength decay  
Yea, though the truth shall slay,  
I will obey."

That is the faith of Abel. That is the faith of the father of the faithful, who went out not knowing whither he went. That is the faith that saves. For God thus gets leave to work. It opens every door, and lets Him in, and there-

fore that is the faith that overcomes the world. Here, then, are the two great thoughts that stand out clear from this first rough draft of sacrifice. First the efficacy of sacrifice depends on the character of the offerer; and second, that in that character the supreme thing is faith—faith that takes God at His word, that surrenders self and selfwill, and throws itself absolutely upon the Word of God for all that God promises of pardon and of power. If our study of the old story shall enable us to make such sacrifice, rich indeed will be our gain.

### III

#### THE FIRST OBJECT-LESSON

GENESIS XXII. 1-14.

**I**N the previous chapter we looked at the first stage of the evolution and coronation of the Lamb. It is away far back in the world's grey dawn. We saw the essential principles lying at the heart of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. But that early world ran its course—its course through sin to sin's goal, extinction. We come now to a new beginning, to the beginning in fact of what may be regarded as more or less authentic history. This story of Abraham is the second great object-lesson in the delivery and development of sacrifice. It is the second clearly marked stage in the evolution and coronation of the Lamb. Let us approach it through our own experience.



Go with the missionary to-day to some new mission field. What is the first thing he does? It is determined by the end he has in view. The end he has in view is the Christianisation of these savage tribes. They are sunk in vice and sin. Yet there are glimmerings of light. Their very sacrifices to their gods have a kernel of truth at the heart. The missionary must try to strip away the layers that cover these, must seek to disentangle the true from the false. How does he set about it? The first thing he does is to select out of the mass two or three that are the most promising for his purpose. There is the doctrine of election that we get so scared at in theology. Well, let us say, then, he elects these, he gathers these about him, he gives them favours, he bestows on them his knowledge, his truth. He concentrates his attention upon them. He seems almost to neglect or forget the rest. Why? He wants to train and to educate these elected ones that through them he may reach the whole tribe. Now that on a small scale is exactly what God has done on a large scale. Here is the world in Abraham's day. It has lost the knowledge of the true God, and therefore of the true life, of all that makes existence strong, serene, triumphant. The whole race is sunk in ignorance, in vice, in bar-

barism. Yet some glimmerings of the light still shine here and there through the darkness, some memories of the true God and of man's relation to Him still survive, burning like stars in the blackened sky of the soul. Well now, God's purpose is to bring human life back into vital touch with Himself. His purpose is to prepare the world for the advent of Christ, and thence for what we have called "The Coronation of the Lamb." He must, therefore, begin somewhere, at some one point in the history, with some one life, at a certain stage in the world's development. He begins, or rather his beginning is seen most clearly with Abraham. He does with Abraham what the missionary to-day does in every new mission field. He elects him out of the mass. He separates him from the race. He gives him special light and insight. He makes him the depository of His thoughts, of His purposes for the world. But to do this Abraham has to be educated out of many of his own ideas and customs. One of these was his conception of sacrifice. There were of course others, but the only one with which we are at present concerned is this one of sacrifice. That is the design of the story in Gen. xxii. Abraham's idea of sacrifice was imperfect. It was coloured more or less by the thought of his age, by the

people among whom he was born, and among whom his life was lived. It was crude and cruel. Yet even these human sacrifices, no matter how abominable they appear to us now, had a great truth at the heart, a truth which could not afford to be lost. Well then, the problem of the story here is to disentangle the true idea of sacrifice from the false, to educate Abraham out of the crude conception of sacrifice, and to mark another stage on the road towards the Coronation of the Lamb. Now how was this done? We shall emphasise three things which contribute to the end in view.

I. Abraham is taught what is the wrong idea of sacrifice.

How was he taught that? He was taught that by being stopped in the very act of slaying his son. But how could he come to think that God could ever require such a thing? To us a suggestion of this kind would be regarded as diabolic. How should Abraham come to think of it therefore as Divine? It has been answered, that though man has no right to take the life of another, God may do it. God may give authority to do it. He is, in fact, doing it every day, or causing it to be done. This reply satisfied so acute a thinker as the late Bishop Butler. Men, he says have no right to

either life or property, save as the grant of God. When that grant is revoked their right ceases. If this revocation is made known, it is not wrong or unjust to deprive them of either. To use an illustration of R. W. Dale's, "If a servant of mine takes five pounds out of my purse secretly and appropriates it to his own use, that is a crime, but if I tell him to do it, he commits no wrong. The act in both cases is precisely the same, but my permission changes its morality. God had authority over Isaac's life, the absolute authority of a Creator. Had Abraham resolved to take Isaac's life without Divine permission, he would have resolved on a crime. There was no crime when God told him to take it." That defence is irresistible. But here is the difficulty. How did Abraham come to believe that God had given him such authority over his son's life? If such a suggestion should come to us, we should promptly crush it as a temptation of Satan. How did Abraham then come to regard it as of God? That introduces us to one of the fundamental differences which has been set forth so clearly by Dr. Mozley between the ancient and the modern world. In the modern world the individual is sacred. Each one stands by himself, and has a right to existence as an individual. In the ancient world there was no such thing. Sir

Henry Maine, possibly our greatest authority on primitive institutions, says : "Ancient law is concerned not with individuals, but with families, not with single human beings, but with groups." The whole household was merged in the head, in the husband and father. His rights were supreme and absolute. The wife and children had no more legal standing in ancient law than the chattels, that is, the cattle or the houses. They were not reckoned as persons. They were reckoned simply as things which he might do with as he chose. That of course does not mean that they were necessarily less dear to him than if they had rights, for it is not legal standing that generates love. Love has an origin anterior to all law. That is the reason why whole households are put to death—as in the case of Achan, for instance—for the sin of one member. The household was not then as it is now, a group of independent individuals, each with separate rights. It was a unity, in which the wrongdoing of a single member, the head, was counted as the wrong-doing of the whole.

Now, if you get hold of this with all its implications, you will see that this command to sacrifice Isaac, which appears to us so immoral, would have no such appearance to Abraham. It would, in fact, never have presented itself to him in that

form. That disposes of the apparent immorality of the act. Now consider this next. Try to imagine yourself in Abraham's circumstances. As he travelled from place to place he would witness sacrifices. He belonged to a race in which they were common. He saw round about him everywhere the tribes making such sacrifices to their gods. It was the perfect flower of their devotion, the highest conceivable offering that could be made to Deity. The question was bound to arise within him, Am I capable of such sacrifices? Are my reverence and homage for my God equal to the reverence and homage of these people I see about me here for theirs? Could I give up my son as I see these others giving up theirs? It was a terrible strain on faith. Think for a minute of what it meant. It was not simply that he should thus surrender his son, his only son, his well-beloved son, but it was this in addition. With that son was bound up his whole family hopes. With that son were joined the promises of God regarding the future. If he should surrender him in death to God, what would become of the future, and of the hopes associated with it? As he brooded over this, it gradually grew upon him that God asked this proof of his fidelity. How God would work out His plans and keep His promises if Isaac were taken

away from the earth, Abraham did not know. But this was just the test and essence of his faith. He took refuge from the mystery of God's doings in God Himself. Here he concluded is the command of God. I must obey. And he raises the knife to slay his child. Then comes the Divine interposition. His hand is arrested just in the very act. A substitute is found. God provides the lamb, and Abraham comes to understand that henceforward the animal instead of the human sacrifice is the acceptable offering to God. That is how he is educated out of the false notion of sacrifice. That is how the great founder of the race that is to carry on the Divine education of the world is led out of the horrible idea that human sacrifices are the highest marks of homage to God.

But now we are at the second point.

The lesson is more than a negative one, more than simply showing the wrongness of the idea. It sets in clear light the right of which it is a shadow. Abraham is taught the supreme truth that the virtue of the sacrifice lies not in the offering, but the offerer, not in the preciousness of the gift, but in the disposition and heart that prompt the gift. We call this story, the sacrifice of Isaac. It should more truly be called the sacrifice of Abraham. Remember what Abraham was, and

what Isaac was to him. Abraham was an old man. His life was nearly done, but Isaac was on the threshold of existence. He was the ark that carried within him the hope of the world. How much easier it would have been for Abraham to kill himself almost than to kill the boy of such promise! To slay Isaac was really worse than to slay himself. It was a sorer sacrifice. It was in fact the highest conceivable. And so, when Abraham made that surrender of his own will, nothing more was necessary. He had learned two truths about sacrifice that henceforward would become the guiding stars for his race. He had learned, first of all, that in the animal God had provided a method of sacrifice which was more acceptable to Him than man. That human sacrifices were henceforward to cease for ever, but not yet animal sacrifices. The day would come when these also should be abolished. But that was in the future. He had learned secondly that the sacrifices of God are a broken heart, that is, God's real and acceptable service is a perfectly surrendered will, an affection that holds God supreme amid objects of the heart's devotion.

But now emerges a third point.

It probably did not occur to Abraham. We have at least no evidence that it did. But the day



came when the question was asked, If God says the perfect life is the life of perfect sacrifice, in what light does God Himself appear? If God is love, and if love in its highest form is the giving of self for the beloved, where is the evidence of that in God? There is the evidence of it in man. Abraham himself is the finest example of it. He takes his son, his only son, his well-beloved son, and is willing to surrender his life to God. Did it occur to Abraham to ask if God were willing to meet him with a corresponding sacrifice? Very likely it did. At least it is possible. "Abraham rejoiced to see My day," says our Lord. "He saw it and was glad." But whether it did or not it has occurred to others. If the highest life conceivable among men is the life of self-surrendering love, what of God? Have we any evidence of such a life in Him? Have we any illustration of His readiness to sacrifice men in the interests of His children? The minds of men in after ages have instinctively fastened on this sacrifice of Abraham, the giving up of his only son, of his beloved son, as a type of what was to come. It was the first of the forward marching gleams of that great light that was to rise upon the world when Christ the Sun of Righteousness should enter human history. If the assumption of Christianity is true, if God so loved the

world that He gave His only begotten Son up to the death for the world, then there is proof, an awful and triumphant proof, that God is love, and that love knows no limit in its sacrifice, except life itself. If that be not true, then there is no such evidence. If that be not true, if God have not really entered our history to live and suffer and go to the cross for our salvation, then our highest reverence must be reserved not for God, but for those of our fellow-men who have done so ; for the prophets and patriots and martyrs who have laid down their lives for the rights and liberties of humanity. There are those who maintain that God is love, therefore He dispenses with sacrifice. A man said to me the other evening, in a sort of passionate protest against the God of the Bible, "That God who says He requires to be propitiated with blood !" What a caricature of the truth ! What is the truth ? The truth is that God is love, therefore He provides a sacrifice, a propitiation. If you say God is the great Father, then we must have evidence of that in sacrifice and suffering for His children. If this book is true, Christ is the complete answer to that. This is the meaning of the Cross. It is not so much Christ taking the place of the guilty, though it certainly is that, as a demonstration for ever of the name and nature of

God, a demonstration that the name and nature of God are love, and love that takes on itself the sins and sufferings of the beloved. Now, there is the test that comes to us all. It is almost, as Dr Dale puts it, the exact opposite to that to which Abraham was subjected. "God proved Abraham by testing whether he had sufficient faith in God to sacrifice his son at God's command. God proves us by testing whether we have sufficient faith in God to believe that He loves us well enough to sacrifice His Son for us. How many of us admire, really admire, the beauty and grace of our Lord's character, and the depth of His teaching? Ah, but admiration is neither the first feeling nor the last that we ought to have for Christ. It is too cold, too remote. The spectators on the shore who see a fisherman leap into a rough sea to save a drowning man imperilling his own life to rescue the life of another they may admire, but the rescued man feels something different from admiration, and far deeper. He owes his life to the man who rescued him, and we, when once we see that the Eternal Son of God has died for us, feel something far deeper than admiration. We see how awful must have been our peril, and we confess that we owe our eternal life to Him. The gospel of Christ proves us, tests our belief in the love of God. The

gospel of Christ proves us. It proves whether we believe that human sin is so awful a thing that even the infinite mercy of God may not be able to forgive it without sacrifice, and it proves whether we believe that, notwithstanding our sin, the mercy of God is so great that the sacrifice has been offered." It has been offered by whom? By man? No, by God. The Son has issued forth out of the heart of the Father. Abraham's words had a larger reach than he dreamed—"God will provide Himself a lamb." And in the humble yet rejoicing acceptance of that, with all its implication, lies the salvation and victory of this life.

## IV

### ANOTHER STAGE IN THE EVOLUTION : THE PASSOVER

#### EXODUS XII.

WE now come to the fourth stage in the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb. We have seen its germ, its beginning, in the sacrifices of Abel. In our last chapter we considered the first systematic object-lesson which God gives of it in His selection and education of Abraham. The culminating point of this education was the sacrifice of Isaac. We saw the great truths which lay in the heart of that incident. Now Abraham's descendants have grown to a nation. The nation is beginning its national life. On the threshold of this national life God lodges in its heart certain

sublime truths about sacrifice. That is the significance of the passover. It brings us to the third great stage in the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb. The passover does not terminate in itself. It is what we call a type. What is a type? "When the miner in the American prairies sinks a shaft to strike the coal formations, he finds far down the images of beautiful plants and ferns and flowers. There they lie spread out on tables of ebony, telling of a time when Summer reigned, and the air was fragrant with the bloom of flowers, and musical with the songs of birds. In northern regions, when you climb the mountains, you perceive traces of an age when huge icebergs grazed their peaks just discernible there above the waters of an Arctic sea. Yet all these, whether tropical or arctic, dimly showed forth more perfect adaptations in nature and nature's growth." And so, as we get back below layer after layer of the Bible strata, we find the same thing. In the law and ritual and ceremonies of an earlier age we find foretellings of a later time. We discover hidden in these things good for their age, but after all only shadows of what was yet to be. And just as in the geologic formation there are some types and prophecies clearer than others, so in the Bible there are certain rites and ceremonies more dis-

tinctly prefigurative of what was coming. Of these the passover is chief. It is one of the clearest of types. It is one of the directest prophecies. Let us consider it, then. For our purpose it will be convenient to think of this rite under two heads :—

1. The act of sacrifice ;
2. And the effect of sacrifice.

First *the act*.

Begin at the beginning. A sentence of death is hanging over Egypt. Israel is in Egypt, but Israel is not to die. Why not? Will any one say that it was a difference in character? Is it to be supposed that Israel escapes this death because the people are better than the Egyptians? No, that is not the ground. It could not be. In point of fact there was probably little difference between the average Israelite and the average Egyptian morally. At any rate, it is quite certain that if you had divided the inhabitants thus, all the good would not have been found on Israel's side and all the evil on the Egyptians'. On what ground, then, is Israel to escape? The ground is not in Israel. It is in God. In other words, Israel's salvation takes origin and issue from God. Now, that is easy said, but it has profound implications. This among the rest: That since every man is a

sinner, if he is to be saved from the wages of sin, which is death, it must be because of the free grace and mercy of God. Furthermore, Israel's salvation not only takes issue out of the free grace of God ; God also provides the means of it. That brings us to the provision of a lamb. Here for the first time we encounter the direct Divine recognition of the lamb in sacrifice. Hitherto sacrifice has been wavering. Sometimes it was plants, sometimes animals—the cow, the bull, the ram, the sheep—but here is the first intimation that the offering of a lamb is henceforward to be the heart of sacrifice. The lamb has now been brought in from the hillside, and is entered into religious symbolism. Other nations found their sacrifices themselves. They offered what pleased them. Israel is not allowed to do that. Israel has its offerings specified, its ritual ordained. Other nations made their sacrifices terminate in themselves. They looked forward to nothing. The animal was an animal, and blood was blood. Their whole emblematic character was dim or non-existent. With Israel it is directly contrary. Nothing terminates in itself. Everything looks forward, is a symbol, has a double significance, a significance seen and recognised ; another invisible, and with face towards the future.



Israel's salvation, then, takes origin in God, and God reveals and provides the method by which it is to be wrought. If you will remember that, it will throw a flood of light on difficulties connected with the Christian Atonement.

Now, the next point is, *the character of the lamb*. It is to be without blemish, in the prime of life. In this you have a secret known only to the writers of the Bible. It is the secret of a sinless life. No other nation has ever realised or ever conceived of such a thing. It is peculiar to the Old and New Testament. It is on this ground that man never can be his own sacrifice, never can offer an adequate expression of penitence for his sin. To do that he must know what it is to be sinless, for you cannot understand sin perfectly unless you look at it from the outside. It is holiness alone that can adequately guess its horror, and it is absolute holiness alone that can feel and express repentance. But no man is this, or ever can be this. He is the product of a race of sinners. He has added to inherited sin his own actual transgressions, and therefore, if confession is to be made by him, it can never be done adequately. That is the reason that lies at the root of the symbol here of the lamb without blemish. It is the fore-shadow of a sinless life that is coming. The lamb was the

best type in the world that could be chosen to represent innocence. There is a gentleness about it that is about no other animal. It is the perfect representation of innocence. That is why it charms us, and sometimes awes us. For as has been truly said, "there is something strange and wonderful about innocence. It has a look of exile, as of something heavenly, detained in slavery upon earth, a look of peril, and of helplessness, such as we sometimes see in children." This is the reason also why the lamb that is henceforward to become the prominent figure in Jewish sacrifices cannot be meant to represent the sinner, for if it had it would not truly do it. To truly do it some spotted or blemished or feeble animal would be the proper thing.

The next thing is, *the lamb is to be slain*. I have already referred to the question of this taking of life. I have pointed out that it must have seemed at first an abhorrent thing. I have striven to show that man could not have brought himself to kill and to eat and to offer animal sacrifices unless in some way he had had a Divine revelation that it would be acceptable to the Deity. Perhaps you shrink from and shudder at all this ritual with its blood and hecatombs of animal sacrifices. It seems to you, it may be, as you read this ritual of

Israel—its smoking victims and slain beasts and running blood—that it is all revolting. Exactly; so it is. It is meant to be. Why? Because we have got to learn that sin is no sunny thing that we can laugh aside and be as though it never had been. No; this is not to be accomplished by æsthetics, or art, or poetry, or the sight of the beautiful. Other nations tried that plan of culture—the Greek, for instance—and we know the result. Greece fell, not because she loved beauty, but because she loved nothing else. The Hebrew worship took its origin in blood, but if it did, its outcome was righteousness and purity. It drew away from the surrounding races, and whilst they festered into corruption it became the world's leader into liberty and life. Until you understand what sin is the blood of Christ will seem to you coarse and extravagant. But when you realise the horror of sin, you will know then that the road to salvation is not a road of rose-water and daintiness. It is a road dyed crimson and haunted for ever by the Cross. And it is because it is so the sinner gets peace of conscience and peace of heart.

Further, the lamb was not only to be killed. The blood was to be sprinkled on the door-posts. That was an essential condition of safety. Then the flesh was to be eaten with certain accompani-

ments. We have already seen what was the significance in both these requirements. Other nations in their sacrifices did this. They killed the animal, they sprinkled the blood, they ate the flesh. In a previous chapter I pointed out the germ of truth after which they were dimly groping. It was the community of life between them and their God. Pardon, reconciliation was not enough. Salvation, to be complete, must mean not only deliverance from the guilt of sin, it must mean a guarantee that sin shall gradually be driven out, and its power broken. This is possible only by sharing the life of God, by God Himself fulfilling us with His own Divine vitality. That was the truth that lay at the heart of all those ancient sacrifices in which the blood was sprinkled and the flesh eaten. It was a long time before Israel was able to disentangle the spiritual from the material. It was not till He came who said, "Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you," that the full significance of this sprinkling of blood and eating of flesh dawned upon the world.

Now these seem to me the most important points in the act of sacrifice. Let me go on to state in a word—

*2. The effect of the sacrifice.*

The effect was salvation. In this salvation three things are involved. It involves, first of all, deliverance from death. The destroying angel passed over the houses on which the blood was sprinkled. It involves, second, food, sustenance. The flesh of the lamb gave them strength for the journey. As they set out they put themselves on the side of God. There is a picture that you sometimes see, called "The Rock of Ages." In the midst of a wild sea a spent swimmer grips with a grip of agony a cross of rock. In one sense that is true enough. In another sense it is imperfect and false. When we pass ourselves in under the control of Christ He does not stand beside us, cold, impassive. He does not leave us storm-beaten and sea-vexed to cling to Him with a clasp of despair. No. The Cross is not stone—it is blood, it is life, it is the living Christ. He does more than take our hands even, He enters into us as the vine into the branches, as the spirit into the body.

It involves, thirdly, the going out into a new life of freedom. The back of their slavery is broken ; the chains are struck off ; Egypt with its master-ship is left behind ; liberty and joy await them in front. These are the elements of their salvation—safety, food, freedom. And now look for a

moment at how it all becomes theirs. It becomes theirs when they receive it. In other words, it is theirs by faith.

Now let us try to bring this whole subject home personally by dwelling on these two points. I say the Israelites had only one evidence of it, obedience. They trusted Moses. They did what he told them. Salvation in its threefold elements—deliverance, food, freedom—became theirs. Now this whole scene is typical of Christ. Christ stands to us in the same relation as Moses to Israel, except that Christ is both the Priest and Prophet, both the Lamb slain and the Revealer of the Divine will. Well, then, over all human life hangs sin, and the wages of sin is death. How is salvation ours? Just in the same way as it came to Israel. Israel did as Moses commanded. They killed the lamb and sprinkled his blood. But observe, there was no efficacy in the blood itself to save. The efficacy lay back in God. Their obedience brought them into harmony with His plans, and it was that in reality that made them secure. Think of how easy scepticism might have arisen, how easy doubts might have come up. "What is the use of this sprinkling of blood? Would it not be better to make other preparations for the journey? Would it not be more rational to spend time in

getting weapons together? After all, Pharaoh's power is really broken. He wants us to go. God knows we are honest and well-meaning, and will do the best we can. Why, therefore, spend time in this other seemingly useless thing?" There was no answer to that scepticism save this: God commands it. This is the way He has chosen to deliver. Israel was free to refuse His method, but freedom meant slavery and death. Obedience meant life and freedom. And now here is Christ. Christ is God's way to Himself. Faith in Him as the Word of God, as our substitute and atonement, is the condition of salvation. Obedience is the evidence of it. It is easy here to bamboozle ourselves with sceptical questions. "How is Christ able to propitiate for sin? How is there life to us through His death? How can we be set free because another dies for us? How can He give us His flesh to eat?" &c. We may not know, we may not be able to explain these things any more than Israel was able to explain the slain lamb, or the efficacy of the blood on the doorposts; nor is it essential to our salvation that we should. It may be essential to our intellectual understanding of it, but it is not essential to its efficacy to us. Doubtless there were Hebrew mothers who, having fulfilled the Divine command,

waited in perfect peace the fulfilment of the Divine promise, and there were others who had put the blood upon the door and yet, with hearts swept by fear and hope, they listened awestruck for the awful waft of the wings of Death's angel. Enter the house of the latter, and ask them what they mean. Ask them, as a writer has put it, why they are shuddering in suspense. "Are they not assured of their salvation?" "Yes," they say, "but they do not feel it." But you reply, "It is not a question of feeling just now, it is a question of faith and obedience. Have you done as Moses commanded?" "Yes," they answer; "but still we are not sure." "No, you are not sure, but you are safe, and why? Go into the house of the others, and they will tell you. There is peace there, and hope, and elation." But you say to these others, "Do you not know that the judgments of God are hurtling in the air to-night?" "Yes," they say, "right well we know it." "And are you not afraid?" "No." "Why not?" "Because we have believed and obeyed. We have killed the lamb, and sprinkled the blood." "But so it is also with the others," you reply, "yet they have not your assurance. They are unhappy and uncertain." "Ah, yes," say these, "but we have more than the sprinkled blood. We have the Word of



God for it. God has said, 'When I see the blood I will pass over.' There must be truth for faith to root itself in. God rests satisfied with the blood outside. We rest satisfied with His word inside. The sprinkled blood makes us safe. The spoken word makes us sure." Thus you see that both these houses are safe. But both have not the same assurance of their salvation, but their safety depends on what God thinks of the blood outside, and not upon the state of their feelings inside. And so, when we give ourselves over to God in Christ, that is our security. Our salvation does not depend on understanding the plan of salvation. It depends upon receiving God who comes to us in Christ. The condition of our salvation is faith. The evidence of it is obedience. No scepticism that fails to keep us from that act of faith is fatal. No faith that falls short of that can save. There may be fifty ways that we might suggest for our salvation other than that which Christ reveals, just as there may have been fifty other things which Israel might have done instead of obeying Moses. But there is only one way God has actually revealed to us. It is open to us, as it was open to Israel, to decline God's plan, only if we do well we must be made to face life, and leap the mystery of death on the off-chance that God

will save us, and receive us in spite of our rejection of His declared way and will. "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned."

## V

### THE EVOLUTION THROUGH THE LEVITICAL RITUAL

LEVITICUS IX. 15, 24.

**I** ENTER on this subject with some diffidence. The Jewish sacrificial system is so elaborate, so detailed, and so difficult that one seriously hesitates to deal with it in a single chapter. Yet we cannot pass it over, and we cannot give more to it. It is an essential stage in the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb. It is not a mere discovery or creation of man. We who believe the Bible is a revelation of God believe that this is part of His revelation. It is one, however, that has in certain quarters been much neglected. Curiously enough this neglect is due in no small measure to the too obtrusive presentation of it in

others. Men have preached and written about it, treating the whole subject in an arbitrary, unhistoric, and pedantic way, so as to repel people of common sense. Meanings the most ridiculous have been squeezed out of, and into, the minutest details, and this has gone on to such an extent that the whole teaching of this wonderful ritual has ceased to have significance for a great many of the more thoughtful people. The error has arisen largely from confounding a symbol with a type, and reading into the one meanings that belong only to the other. What is the distinction between a type and a symbol? A type is prophetic. The object is not complete in itself. It points forward to a fulfilment. A symbol, on the other hand, is something which contains a present truth veiled in some indirect form. Thus, for instance, a bud is the type of a flower. But you only recognise it as such after you have seen the flower. Previous to that the bud has a completeness and a beauty and a truth of its own. But its full beauty and truth and completion live on in the flower. So this Jewish ritual is both a symbol and a type. To the Israelites who never saw Christ the ritual had a meaning of its own. It was symbolical of certain great truths which appealed to those of that age. It

was not a mere dumb show. It impressed the mind and conscience of the time with certain great facts. But we who go back into it with the light of Christ discover far deeper and fuller significance than was possible to the Jew before Christ's day. We see that it was not symbolical merely, it was typical. It was not complete in itself. It was the prophecy of what was yet to be. But men have approached the study of this subject and read into the Jewish consciousness a knowledge of types which they certainly did not possess. They have omitted to set forth the truth which they did feel and understand. They have dealt with the subject as if it were all typical and nothing more. They have omitted or depressed to a vanishing point the symbolical aspect, the aspect of the system which it assumed to the Jew of that age. And the consequence is that much of the interpretation is finical and fantastic. Yet we must not allow this unfortunate treatment to turn us aside. Certain great principles are embodied in the heart of this ritual. We must try to disentangle them, and show their bearing on the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb. Although this whole system of sacrificial offerings looks complicated it may, for our purpose, be reduced to three very simple divisions—Sin- and

trespass - offerings, burnt - offerings, and peace-offerings. All the sacrifices in which blood was involved may be summed up under one or other of these divisions. In spiritual experience they will be found to correspond to these three great unchanging realities—expiation, consecration, and fellowship. We will look briefly at each of these offerings.

I. The sin- and trespass-offerings.

These mark a great advance. Up till the appointment of Priesthood the order in these offerings was that the sin-offerings came last. They were preceded by the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings, but in the later history—in the history subsequent to the establishment of the Priesthood—this order is reversed, and the sin-and trespass-offerings are placed first. This is very significant. The burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings were symbolical of thanksgiving and fellowship, and such offerings were not peculiar to Israel. But the sin- and trespass-offering is peculiar to Israel, and its rank in the order of offerings marks a clear advance in man's approach to God. It indicates that Israel has reached the consciousness that there is a barrier between God and man created by sin, and that until that sin is expiated he cannot come into God's presence to

thank Him for favours received or seek communion with him. That is the secret God deposited in the sin-offering, and the place which he gave it in the ritual. Now let us see how the offering throws that into prominence. In the first place the offering is an animal. We have seen in a former lecture why an animal was chosen, and why this animal was a lamb. The animal stood closest to human life, therefore it was a more proper offering for the purpose than plants or vegetables. But what was the purpose? The purpose was this : man's life was forfeit to God. He had sinned. "The wages of sin is death." Were this penalty exacted, human life would come to an end. Yet the law which ordained it was a righteous law. It was the expression not of the will merely, but of the very Being of God. Hence it could not be repelled or set aside without shaking the whole foundation of righteousness in God's existence. But God in His mercy had provided a way by which this debt of justice should be discharged. Its full revelation belonged to a later time, but the type of it was here. Since life was forfeit, God finds a substitute for it. It is found first of all in the animal. The animal is slain, blood is shed, it is sprinkled on the altar. That is the surrender of it to God. But now

remember what the blood is. Moses explains it in Leviticus xviii. 11, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life." What is the meaning of that? The meaning is this: When men slew an animal they noticed from the very first the close connection between blood and life. As the blood flowed the life ebbed with it. They came to conclude, therefore, that the life was somehow in the blood. This was the universal belief. It is not, therefore, the blood itself, the mere material atoms, but because the blood is somehow the shrine of life, and makes the offering efficacious. Hence the idea expressed is that the soul or life of the offered victim is substituted for the soul or life of the offerer. This was the great truth hidden in these animal sacrifices. Man's life was forfeit to justice and death by reason of sin, but instead of exacting the full penalty God provided and accepted the temporary substitute of an animal's life. When this life was offered up, as symbolised in the blood sprinkled on the altar, then the sinner was passed over. A life that had not been forfeited was accepted in lieu of one that had. This was the reason why human sacrifices could not be acceptable. Every



man stood in the same category as his fellow. All had sinned. His offering therefore even of himself could not be tolerated. The nearest approach to a sinless life was the life of an innocent creature, a lamb without blemish and without spot. Now, I know that already half a dozen objections and difficulties may arise in your mind. But wait a little. I will refer to some of these in a moment. Note two other things in connection with these animal sacrifices. First, they were to be killed. Those at least which were sin-offerings, and the offerer was to lay his hand upon the victim's head. Hands in such position are the symbols always of communications. What, then, had the offerers of these animal sacrifices which the victims themselves did not possess? One thing only, guilt. That was what was conveyed by the imposition of the hands. The animal became the representative of him in his state of guilt, and therefore its death followed. The animal was God's gift to man. By God's direction man takes this gift and makes over to it as innocent his own guilt. Then one other thing followed. The flesh of the animal was consumed by fire. That was the symbol of acceptance by God. The word by which burnt-offering is designated is a word which means to ascend, and so we read of it "ascending as a sweet

savour unto God." Now, this is the significance of the sin-offerings. Remember, they were the foundation of all the rest, and they were constantly present before the eye and mind of Israel. A lamb was slain every morning and every evening. This was doubled on Sabbath. The number of offerings was increased at every new moon, at the four great festivals. In fact the whole system of animal sacrifices and of blood ritual was woven through and through the hourly and daily life of the Jews. Whatever else he might mistake he could not mistake this. He could not fail to see the great fact of sin and of expiation wrought into every thought and fibre of his being. Now, I have said this sin-offering was the foundation of all the rest. It took the first place in the Jewish ritual. Let us, then, go on to look at the other two great sacrifices that made up this ritual. One of these is—

## II. The burnt-offering and peace-offering.

Historically, this is the oldest of all. It was man's expression of gratitude to God. But in the Jewish ritual only does it appear after the sin-offering. It was consumed wholly upon the altar. The symbolism of that was clear enough. It indicates complete dedication, perfect giving up of the life to God. But associated with the burnt-

offering, and always offered with it, was the meal or meat-offering, consisting of flour, oil, frankincense, and salt. The symbolism of this is clear also. Just as the burnt-offering signified the complete dedication of the life to God, the meal- or meat-offering signified the dedication of life's achievements to God. The burnt-offering expressed the consecration of what a man is, the meal-offering of what he has. Thus these two joint sacrifices covered the whole totality of existence in its being and its work. It was the fullest possible expression of complete consecration, consecration of what a man is and what a man has. The third great sacrifice was the peace-offering. The name is enough here to indicate the significance. Emerging out of expiation and consecration comes fellowship with God, and the result of this fellowship is peace. "Justified by faith, we have peace with God." Now, I am conscious that this chapter may seem very unsatisfactory; the ground is so extensive, and the multitude of points so intricate and difficult to compress into a short space. Yet in spite of the unsatisfactoriness of the presentation you may perhaps have some clearer idea of the wonderful completeness and orderliness of this ancient system of saving truth. It begins with

the effort to emphasise the immaculate holiness of God as seen in His view in human sin. Then there arises the ritual which takes issue out of expiation, and expiation is followed by consecration, and consecration by communion—communion whose fruits are peace and joy. But we cannot have gone thus far without a crowd of difficulties emerging. It must, for instance, have slowly grown on the more thoughtful of the Jewish people that this system, wonderful as it was, could not be intended to be permanent. When they began to seriously investigate how the animal life could be a substitute for theirs, they must have been greatly perplexed. There was, for instance, a vast disproportion between their soul and the soul of the creature offered. Theirs was rational. The animal's was not. Thus the transference of guilt or innocence from life to life must have seemed ultimately impossible. The sin of man was a voluntary act of free will, but the victim was forced to death. The atonement was not done by it. It was done upon it. Therefore it was inherently inadequate. Then in the burnt-offering the completeness of self-dedication was only a dream, a counsel of perfection. They knew quite well that the perfect surrender of self or of their works was impossible. The sacrifice was

only a sacrifice in name. Their salvation could not rest in the sacrifices themselves. It rested in God. It was made sure to them by faith. They could only take His word for it. But as time went on it became more and more difficult to find a rational explanation of the adequacy of these sacrifices, or how they could be effective in taking away sin. At last a stage was reached when these sacrifices came to be identified not with an animal, but with man, not with a lamb from the hillside, but with a lamb slain before the foundation of the world. One of their poets gives voice to this in Psa. l., when he represents God as saying that He would not take sheep or bulls from them, that He did not actually desire such. Another of their poets foresees the goal to which they point forward. He identified them with a great coming One, a Person who is to sum up in Himself all these ideals. "Sacrifice and offerings Thou didst not require. Then said I, Lo, I come : in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O God." We shall see how this transition is made, how the nation or at least its leaders are actually educated out of all such sacrifices ; how they pass from the system of animal offerings to Him of whom they were all shadows and types.

Two points remain for emphasis. First of all, we see the unity of religion all along its course here. Christianity in one sense is not new. It is the slowly elaborated product of the centuries. Christ's entrance into history is not an after-thought on the part of God, nor is it a sudden irruption into a world wholly unprepared. No, He comes at the end of a long evolution—an evolution ordered and educated to use the resources with which He is advancing to meet it. That we shall be helped to understand, I hope, by this chapter.

The second point is this: The religion of the ancient Jew and of ourselves is essentially the same. It is born out of the same enduring needs. It rests on the same great truths. It involves the same imperative duties. The central truth of all this Jewish ritual is, as we have seen, expiation. The redemption of one life by another, and that is the root of our religion. Everything grows out of the Cross. The Cross is the symbol of our redemption. It is the surrender of a holy and immaculate life for a guilty and doomed life. It is the entrance of God into our history, and Himself providing the Lamb for our deliverance. Christian life has never really begun till it realises that it is a ransomed life, till welling up out of its experience there arises the hymn of praise—

“ Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stodd ;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood,  
Hallelujah ! what a Saviour ! ”

That is expiation. That is what the Jew had to take in trust on God's word. That is what we see in actual fact in Jesus Christ. Then consecration, that is the consequence. The slain lamb is followed by the burnt-offering. The truth of expiation involves the duty of consecration. “ He died that they which live should henceforth live no longer unto themselves.” Then communion, that is the result, expiation as a truth, consecration as a duty, and now growing out of this, peace, joy. “ Being justified by faith we have peace with God.” Peace ! it is what the world is hungering for. The wolf is at its heart. Matthew Arnold, the characteristic poet of our age, voices it—

“ I, high on men's impious uproar hurled,  
Think often as I hear them rave,  
That peace has left the upper world,  
And now keeps only in the grave.”

But there is no peace there, or if it be it is only the peace of rocks and stones. Peace ! there is but one way to it. It is the way through expiation and consecration, the way trodden by Him who

says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." Yes, that is indeed the only abiding peace.

"Not peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,  
Full of white languor to decline and cease ;  
But peace whose names are also rapture, power,  
Clear sight and love : for these are also parts of  
peace."

And such peace is only won through expiation and consecration. This and no other is the way to that peace of God which passeth understanding, and which the world cannot give and cannot take away.



## VI

### THE EVOLUTION IN PROPHECY

ISAIAH LIII. 7.

“He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.”

I WILL begin by a rapid glance over the ground which we have travelled. The problem we have been working at is to determine how a simple common name becomes the greatest of all proper names, how a lamb on the hillside passes into the Lamb climbing up through long reaches of history into the very throne itself of God. Well, we have seen how animals have acquired a sacred significance; how the goat and the cow and the bull, and finally the sheep and the lamb, have been brought from the hillside to the altar, have passed from mere dumb creatures

to a Divine sacredness. We have seen that the reason they got this preference over the fruits of the earth was this: their life was felt to be nearer to man's. It was the likest man could get to his own. In the dawn of history we see man fancying when he thought that his God was angry with him, that if he could renew the sundered friendship through a common meal, that all would be well. He thought to propitiate his Deity by the highest gifts, and the highest gifts were animals, and especially the blood. Blood was the most sacred because it was the life. Hence the universality of animal sacrifices. But man reached another stage. Sooner or later it dawned upon him that although there could not be a nearer life to man's, that the human life itself might be more acceptable to God. Hence arose the offering of human sacrifices, and then the next stage was the rarer and the more beautiful the human life, the more valuable the sacrifice, and therefore the more worthy of the Deity. This was the state of things when the main history of the Bible begins. The Old Testament is the story of man's education out of the thought of animal and human sacrifices into the reality which they foreshadowed. It begins, as we saw, with Abraham. Abraham is taught that the true offering is not the human life, but human will. It

is not what he has, but what he is. But there is another point. It is here for the first time we hear the significant words about a lamb—"God will provide Himself a Lamb." Then Abraham's descendants grew to a nation. On the threshold of their national life the object-lesson is sent them. It is the passover, the lamb. We investigated the significance of that. Now we have got the lamb definitely brought in from the hillside. We see it acquire a new and solemn significance as a sacrifice. Its material worth is coloured henceforth by its religious uses. What these are we have embodied in that wonderful ritual. We considered the central essence of that system in our last chapter. We found that this elaborate ritual moves round three kinds of sacrifices—sin-offerings, burnt-offerings, peace-offerings. Perhaps as you read these long, and on the surface tedious, chapters which detail with such minuteness the construction of the Ark, the sacrifices and slaughter of animals, and the bleeding and smoking offerings every day and almost every hour of the day, you say to yourself, Why did God establish such a thing? Why not sweep away this whole system of sacrifice, and introduce at once the real thing? Simply for the same reason as you have to run with a runaway horse a bit before you can stop him. Or suppose you adopt a boy.

He has been living half wild. He knows little of manners or of books. You begin to educate him. What are you compelled to do? You are compelled to start where he is, not where you are. You might like to begin him, say, with Shakespeare, but you must teach him to read first. You cannot jump steps like that in the education of the mind. Human nature is not a piece of clay. It is a living organism, and you cannot hurry it, and you cannot force it. That was the case with Israel. Israel, when God adopted the nation, was in spiritual childhood. It was in a low moral level. God had to deal with it not as He might have desired, but where He found it. He had to accommodate Himself to their culture in order to lift them up to His. That is the reason why He gave them this elaborate ritual.

Now, mark how far we have got. We have seen the universality of offerings. We have seen how animal offerings came to be regarded as superior to vegetable, or fruit, or any other kind of offerings. We have seen among these animals some drawn to the front as best, and at last the lamb singled out and given special emphasis in the round of sacrifices. Now, I want to show the transition from the animal to the man, the identification of the lamb from the hillside with the Lamb

of God. It came about in this way. I pointed out how this vast and elaborate system of ritual and sacrifices given to Israel could not be permanent. It was never intended to be. It was typical. It pointed forward to a fulfilment. It simply preserved certain great truths as the shell preserves the kernel of the nut, till it ripens and expands, and throws it off of itself. Well now, this was what the ceremonial laws of Israel were intended to do. I said that sooner or later as the mind matured there would come a doubt regarding the efficacy of these sacrifices and services. This was what actually did happen. As time went on the more thoughtful of the people began to ask themselves how an animal could be a substitute for a man. The disproportion between the two lives they saw was immense. The human life was rational, the animal was not. Moreover, human sin was the action of a free being. The atonement provided for it was the death not of a free being, but of an unwilling creature. How could there be a transference of guilt or innocence from life to life in such a case as this? It came to be seen, as the writer of the Hebrews expressed it, that "it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin." Hence it was borne in upon them that the animal could not be a real

substitute. It could only be a representative, and their salvation rested not on any efficacy in the victim offered. It rested on the testimony of God who had chosen that way to lead them on to His deeper truth. The animal then was a representative. But a representative of whom or what? Before that question was answered, hundreds of years had to elapse. During the centuries the nation divides into two. On one side you see the mass of the people losing sight of the symbolism. You see them resting in the symbolism, and taking it for fact. You see them supposing that the observances of these ceremonials had in itself an ethical value apart from the disposition or spirit of those who performed them. On the other side you see a few of the higher minds penetrating to the real truth. You see them discovering the reality behind the symbol, and of which the symbol is but the expression. The first note of this division appears at the history of Saul. Saul had been bidden by God to do a certain thing. He did not do it. Samuel the prophet challenged him. The king defended himself on the ground that he had atoned for his disobedience by a peculiarly liberal sacrifice, an offering to God. Then Samuel flamed up, "Hath the Lord," he said, "delight in burnt-offerings as in hearkening to His voice? Behold, to

obey is better than burnt-offerings, and to hearken than the fat of rams." This is the great moral conflict that is now started in Israel's history. It goes forward for generations. On the one side stand most of the kings and priests and the great mass of the people. On the other, the poets and the prophets. It is the perception of this very thing that makes them the seers of their time. Read the Psalms, and you will find how constantly the emphasis is shifted from rituals and ceremonies to the disposition of the heart. When you turn to the Prophets, this is also the striking thing in them. When the great sun-burst of prophecy rose on Israel, the nation had sunk in the grossest superstition. It had come into contact with the surrounding peoples. They had felt the fascination of great empires like Syria and Phenicia. In all these empires—in Moab, Syria, Philistia, and Phenicia—the masses of the people lived in the grossest sensualism, while at the same time their religious rites were elaborate, and punctiliously performed. Israel had caught their fashion. On the one hand the people practised injustice, impurity, gluttony, drunkenness, while on the other they made broad their phylacteries, erected fresh altars to Jehovah and other gods, and increased their ceremonial observances. They

fancied that all their sins were atoned for by the regular and elaborate observances of the rituals of religion. This might seem incredible did we not know that in principle the same thing is practised in our own day. This was the state of matters when a sudden advent of prophets startled the national consciousness. It began at the eighth century B.C. The leaders in this great reform were Micah, Amos, and Hosea. They all appeared about the same time. Read their writings and you will understand the state of matters. But the greatest of all this band of reformers was Isaiah, who woke to life the deadened consciousness of his time by asking, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs, or of he-goats." "Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." This is the keynote that runs through Isaiah's prophecy, and for a time there was a change.

The great King Hezekiah put himself at the head of the reformers. The land was swept clear of idolatry, and the nation seemed to recover its



consciousness once more. Now, the great central feature of the prophecy is a figure who appears under the name of "The Servant of Jehovah." At first Isaiah seems to understand by the figure Israel himself as a nation. Israel has been chosen, set apart, educated, enlightened, in order to vindicate God's sovereignty and grace upon the earth. But as time went by this hope fades out. As long as Hezekiah lived Israel gave promise of great things, but Hezekiah was killed at the fatal battle of Megiddo. He was succeeded by an ignoble man. The evil influence of the court did what it always does. It filtered down rank below rank among the people till the nation grew corrupt again, and at last its liberties and its existence as a kingdom are crushed beneath the heel of Assyria. Israel as a whole will not be Jehovah's servant. His conception narrows down to a select few. His hope for the future is centred in them. It is thus all great reformers have to act. When the nation fails, they are driven back upon a small band who share their faith. But gradually the vastness of the work to be done began to appal the great prophet. He saw how feeble were the forces he could bring into the field to counter-act those already there. And so at last he began to look away from the present. Then there comes

to haunt his vision the figure of a great coming one. First of all it takes shape in the advent of a mysterious child. His name is Emmanuel. As time goes on this child becomes a man, and in the far horizon there rises ever clearer and more distinct the outline of a great coming servant of Jehovah. The idea has now narrowed down from the nation and from the select few to the individual. The outline of His form and character becomes more and more distinct, till in the fifty-second and fifty-third chapters it stands out clear and full before us. We see at length this meek, majestic one round whom all prophecy converges. Now, in connection with the great figure that appears in these chapters, the notable thing for our purpose is this : In Him for the first time we come on the identification of the lamb of sacrifice with a person. "*He* is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." We must take another chapter to fill in the wonderful outlines of this servant of Jehovah who appears here in this remarkable capacity. I will only ask your attention to one point, the identification of the lamb of the old sacrifices with this mysterious man. He takes the place of the animal. On the head of the animal were laid the sins of the people. The lamb was their substitute. It stood for atonement between

them and God. But now the lamb, the animal, disappears. It is merged in this coming servant, in this mysterious Divine human one. No longer on an animal, but on *Him* is laid the iniquity of us all; and it is laid by God. And, what is more, this new victim comes with what the other sacrifices could never have, namely, consent. He is *willing* to bear. He offers no objection. He is meek and silent, going to His death of sacrifice without a murmur. And now, here is the wonderful thing. It is when He does this. It is when He pours out His soul unto death for the transgressions—it is then God crowns Him. It is then He wins a seed, and He shares the spoil; and so the way to the throne is the way of sacrifice. The way to power and royalty is the way of service to others. “To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” In other words, who enters into the strength of God? Who is it taps the Divine resources of might? And the prophet answers by drawing the picture of one who gives Himself up to the service of others, who takes their burdens, their sickness, their guilt upon Himself, who feels with the stricken, and the sorrowing, and the downcast, and the sin-oppressed. He is willing to set aside self, to go down into the deeps with these. This is the man of power. This is the

man to whom God reveals Himself in all His strength. This is the man who mounts highest in the kingdom which is eternal. Do we not know that it is so even in these passing kingdoms of earth? Why is the great river mighty with its volumes of water? Because it goes down lowest. That is the reason why it receives all the shallow streams. It stoops deeper than they, and so it rolls masterfully with its mighty volume to the sea. So is it in life, in life of every stage. The way to power is the way of service. The way to ascend is to descend. The way to the thrones of earth that endure is the way of sacrifice. As Swinburne expresses it in an impressive verse—

“Unto each man his handiwork, unto each his crown  
the just Fate gives ;  
Whoso takes the world's fate unto him, and his own  
lays down, he dying so lives.  
For an hour you look at him, and he is no more seen,  
for one hour's space ;  
Then you lift up your eyes to him, and behold him  
crowned a deathless face.”

## VII

### THE DAWN

ISAIAH LII., LIII.

I SUPPOSE we have watched the dawn breaking over the eastern hills. In these southern lands it comes swiftly. In northern lands it is very slow. But even here it does not come at a stride. At first there are little dots in the darkness. Then they join, and faint lines of light streak the eastern sky. Other premonitions are seen and heard. The twitter of birds goes by on the breeze. Gradually the streaks of light merge into a faint flush. The flush of clearness deepens and widens and becomes more distinct.

“And suck’d from out the distant gloom  
A breeze began to tremble o’er  
The large leaves of the sycamore  
And fluctuate all the still perfume.

And gathering freshlier overhead,  
    Rocked the full-foliaged elms and swung  
    The heavy-folded rose and flung  
The lilies to and fro, and said :

‘The dawn, the dawn,’ and died away,  
    And East and West, without a breath  
    Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,  
To broaden into boundless day.”

Now, that is the sort of progress that we have been tracing in the evolution of the Lamb. In the last chapter I tried to show how Israel was slowly led on through the ritual and sacrifices which God had given them to the deeper significance that lay at their heart. I tried to show how belief in the efficacy of animal sacrifices was discredited in the interests of a higher sacrifice—the sacrifice of the human will. I tried to show also the transition from the literal lamb to a man. This evolution reaches its culmination in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Here, for the first time, we see the Lamb of sacrifice, the mere animal depressed, and a mysterious man taking its place. “He is led as a lamb to the slaughter.” Now, let us study the outlines of this wonderful One who is henceforward to take the place of the animal. He appears in the prophecy under the name of the Servant of Jehovah. He haunts the preceding

chapters. He moves spectre-like through the visions of the prophet, and at last, in this fifty-third chapter, we get the clear outline of His character and work. Let us look at these a little. They belong to the next stage in the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb. In the interpretation I follow Professor Smith in his Commentary on Isaiah. First of all He advances into this fifty-third chapter as a sufferer. The writer had already seen Him as servant, then as prophet, then as martyr in preceding chapters. The effects of the vision on Him as a sufferer are to turn men away from Him. "There is no beauty or attractiveness about Him." We need not wonder at that. Men are not drawn naturally to pain. There is a striking statement, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." But though that may be true of God, it is not true of man. Pain is repulsive to man. In the lower creation, animals cannot stand pain. They forsake the suffering. They even kill their weak or misformed offspring. So was it at first with man. Away back in the early ages there was no place for the weak, the poor, the pain-stricken. You have a survival of this still in the attitude of pagan people towards female children. Such are regarded with contempt. They are even killed just as ancient

Greece and Rome destroyed their sick and their misformed offspring. It took ages to educate mankind out of this contempt for the sufferer. Even yet among those not under the sway of the Christian doctrine the thing is not done. There is a school of writers among ourselves at this moment who advocate the extinction of the weak and the incurable and the criminal. Why, we can hardly help aversion from such malformations ourselves. Do we not every day allow the bareness of poverty, the ugliness of disease, the unprofitableness of misfortune, the ludicrousness of failure, to keep back conscience from discovering to us our share of responsibility for them. Well, the prophet says that was the first effect of the appearance of this mysterious sufferer among men. "They hid as it were their faces from Him."

But that cannot last long. Pain is widespread. Sooner or later we have all got to face it. Sooner or later the question is forced on us, what does it mean? The prophet in this chapter here finds the people asking the question regarding the mysterious sufferer who takes the place of the sacrificial lamb. "Pain," says the dying atheist in Edna Lyall's novel "We Two," "is an odd mystery." The answer of the prophet in this chapter is that pain is penal. The sufferer is



suffering for his sin. He is suffering because God has reached him with His punitive justice. This is the earliest method of solving the mystery of pain. That was how Job's friends insisted on explaining the mystery of his sufferings to him. He had done wrong. Job protested he was not conscious of it. No matter. They insisted he was mistaken, and so through chapter after chapter of the drama they sought to convince him. So here we accounted Him "stricken of God and afflicted." It was God that was vindicating the breach of His laws in the suffering of this servant. But though the sinner may be individually responsible for his sin, yet we cannot long look into the question without coming to see that no sinner stands alone. The individual life is not an isolated life. It is part of an organism. Humanity is one body, and every individual takes something from that body. Among the rest he takes sin. There is no sinner in the community with whom all of us are not more or less connected. There is not a prisoner in the local gaol with whom we are not all indirectly related. We have contributed something to the atmosphere of the surroundings that make the criminal possible. Thus sin, while it is the individual's own, is yet diffusive and distributive. That is the next stage

which we see here in the prophet's conception of this servant. He sees that He is suffering, that He is suffering for sins, and now that he is suffering for the sins of others. He was pierced for iniquities that were ours. He was crushed for crimes that were ours. But there is more than that. This suffering of His is not only vicarious, it is also redemptive. It is not only suffering *with* the guilty, it is suffering *for* the guilty, and it has a softening effect upon them. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."

Now, this is a great stride forward. Observe the stages of it. First they, whoever they are who speak in this chapter, see a mysterious suffering One who takes the lamb's place. The first effect of that sight upon them is to turn them away from Him. But they ask themselves the meaning of this pain. They account for it, first, because of the servant's own sin. Then they recognise that the sin is not His own. It is theirs. His suffering, therefore, is vicarious. He is suffering for them. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He does more. It is redemptive as well as vicarious. It is the means of their healing and their peace. "With His stripes we are healed. Now, how did they reach this

consciousness? They had only to look into their own experience. There is no law so clear and so widespread as the law of vicarious suffering. What is family life but the everlasting witness of it, the strong bearing the infirmities of the weak, the healthy suffering for the sick, the holy for the sinful? That is what makes a family possible. All human life is built up on this law. It is this law which gives sanction to home. It is this which knits armies into the grace of chivalry, men into the power of comradeship, and nations into a common brotherhood. But more than that: vicarious suffering is not only universal as a law, it is also redemptive as an agent. The innocent, by taking on himself the sins of the guilty, redeems the guilty. It breaks the power of sin. It sends sin away. Over and over again this has happened. Over and over again the father has been restored through the sufferings which his sins have caused on innocent child or wife, son or daughter by the sufferings of a holy and gentle mother. Love going into sacrifice for the beloved has in multitudes of cases redeemed the beloved. Life and literature are full of the triumphs of such.

Now, in these principles Israel had been more deeply baptized than any other nation. Frequently they had been taught their solidarity in sin and in

goodness. Frequently they had learned their moral unity as a people. They had learned that the whole race suffers for the sins of the individual, and had been restored again because of the goodness of an individual. They thought first of all that the righteous ought not to suffer. But they saw them suffering, suffering more than even the wicked. As they pondered over this, they came to see, some of them at least, that they were suffering vicariously. That solidarity of the nation was so real and deep, that if one sinned all were involved in that sin, that all suffered for it. The great founder of their race, Abraham, was taught this truth when he pleaded for Sodom. The nation learned it again in the case of Achan. Later on the people were several times spared because of a pious remnant. Far away back their great leader stood in the breach between God and them, so did later prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They were set to bear the guilt of the people, and their sufferings for national wrong-doing were efficacious. Thus Israel's history easily prepared them for such a vision as is unfolded in this chapter, even of a Great Coming One who was to do for the people and for the world what their great leaders had done for their forefathers, what was dimly shadowed forth in their ritual and sacrifices. But more than

that: the vision of the suffering servant here carried them up from the human to the Divine. In dealing with the story of Abraham I said the question might possibly have occurred to him if he was ready to make the tremendous sacrifice of his son to God, "Had God done anything like that for him?" We have learned to call God Father. We know something of what an earthly father is, something of his readiness to serve and sacrifice himself for his children. Is there anything like that in God's revelation of Himself to us? In Browning's wonderful poem of "Saul" he draws the picture in that poem of the weary, devil-possessed king. Then David comes, the pure, sweet youth, fresh from the hillsides, and seeks to comfort him. He begins by playing first the well-known music associated with everyday life—the pastoral airs, the harvester's song, the funeral chant, the wedding march, then the great martial music of men who fight for freedom. But none of these seem to reach the stricken soul. Then he tries the deeper strains—the strains of worship, the Levites' song as they go up to the altar of God—and Saul begins to be moved—moved, not yet with healing, only with pain. The body writhes, but the soul is not yet reached with help. Then David tries another. The song of all that Saul's life has been to him,

and of what it might have been. And so he goes on playing one thing after another, and the sick-soul king looks at him woefully, hopelessly, and the generous youth returns the look, yearns, prays, agonises how to help, comfort, and uplift the stricken monarch. And then the boy, taking hold of this, pushes it forward to its last issue. If man, he says, is willing to do this much for his fellow, shall God be behind? The higher man is, this yearning love which seeks to suffer for and redeem is more pronounced. And God, who made man, and of whom this must be a revelation, shall He be outdone by His creature? No. This sacrifice that we see and know among ourselves is but a shadow of the Eternal.

“Do I find love so full in my nature, God’s ultimate  
gift,  
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this  
man,  
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet  
alone can?”

After pursuing this thought to its human reaches, he rejects the idea. He concludes that all he would do for Saul but cannot shall be done by God. That the *power* which is almighty shall be almighty in *love*, and shall prove itself such by its sacrifice—

by its sacrifice for and redemption of the beloved. Well, that may be an imaginative reading of David's consciousness, and yet both he and his race were not without materials for such a conclusion. They saw the great leader and prophet suffering for them vicariously. They saw him bearing their sins and redeeming them. Nay, their poets had told them that God was one with them in their sufferings, that He was a burden-bearer, that in all their afflictions He was afflicted. Thus the vicarious and redemptive element was in God as well. What could be more natural therefore than that the prophet should see in this vision a Great Coming Saviour, one who was Divine as well as human, and who, because He was God and man in one person, should be the ground of a perfect atonement between the human and the Divine? That was the picture which the prophet here lifted up before the eyes of his time. These were the great outlines of the Person and His work who is the central figure of that picture. But that age passed away and never saw His advent. So did many another. But the great thing is, the ideal is lodged there now in the nation's heart, and will never leave it. The lamb from the hillside has merged and disappeared in this great mysterious One who henceforth haunts the hope, and the history, and

horizon of the chosen people. We know who it is for whom that picture stands. We know in whom its great outlines find their fulfilment.

I said in the last chapter that the road to kingship was the road of the Cross, the road which that servant of Jehovah is here represented as treading. He wins His crown because He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Now, my point is this. Has He won the kingship over us? I said above that vicarious sacrifice is also redemptive. That when we realise another suffers for us, and with us, it has a mighty transforming effect upon our life. When we recognise that another feels our sins, and voluntarily takes them on Him as His own, it may be productive of two effects. It may either harden us or melt us. Harden us; for curiously enough men have come to dislike and even hate the very persons who have done them good. There are people in this town, and every other, actually being made worse by the very love which surrounds them. But that is the last degradation of human nature. The feelings that it should beget in us, this vicarious suffering, ought to be shame and pity, and swiftly following on these, remorse, then gratitude, then love, then



as the result of the expulsive power of this new affection, a changed life. To lay hold of that and let it produce such results in our life, that is the gospel. Well, Christ has done all that for us. We do not live in an age when this vision here is an unfulfilled prophecy. We live when the great Figure in the picture has stepped down from its frame-work and become actual flesh and blood in our world. It is no far-off ideal that we contemplate. It is a fact realised in history, and with a direct personal relation to every one of our lives. What has been the result, then, upon us? Has this Christ who poured out His soul unto death for you and me won the mastery of us? Does He sit on the throne of our hearts? Have we uplifted Him in our lives as King of kings and Lord of lords? It is possible that some of us may regard Him with indifference, that we may still go on living a life that nails Him to the cross, and still keeps open the wounds. It is an awful example of ingratitude, an ingratitude so great that one would not be surprised at any other crime which the life might do. It is possible there are some of us who admire the Christ, who admire His character and His teaching. Ah, but as Dr. Dale has said, admiration is neither the first feeling nor the last that we ought to have for Christ. It is too cold, it

is too remote. The spectators on the shore who see a fisherman leap into the sea to save a drowning person they may admire ; but the rescued man feels something different, something far deeper. He owes his life to the man who rescued him. And when we see that the Eternal Son of God has poured out His soul unto death for us, it must be like that. It is not admiration alone, an admiration that may allow us to still live a life of our own, uncommitted, unconcerned about Him. No. It is something far deeper than admiration ; it is shame, it is remorse, it is a surrender that pulls up self by the roots and commits us in passionate devotion to that mighty Saviour who has rescued us from death and hell. It is this, or else for us the gospel has as yet no real meaning, and Christ has died in vain.

## VIII

### "THE FULNESS OF TIME

GAL. iv. 4.

**I**N the previous chapter I tried to draw the outline of that great picture in which the sacrificial lamb as an animal melts away and merges into a man. The point of disappearance is the fifty-third of Isaiah. In that for the first time you see the mysterious Person who is to take the place of the lamb in sacrifice. Let me recall the main outline of the picture. First the mysterious Man appears as a sufferer. Pain is never attractive, and the result of this was, "There was no beauty that they should desire Him." But pain is imperative because it is universal, and people sooner or later are forced to ask what it means. They asked this of the Sufferer here. At first

they thought His sufferings were penal—"Smitten of God and afflicted." Then they came to see that this was not so. They came to see that He was innocent, that He had done no wrong. Then they discovered further that His sufferings were vicarious. He was bearing the sin of others. He was involved with them in their guilt. Then they discovered still further that this union was voluntary. It was not forced. It was accepted. It was borne in upon them that His sufferings were not merely vicarious, they were redemptive. They were not merely sufferings with others, they were sufferings endured for others. They became the efficient cause of their redemption. He justified many. He bears their iniquities. Furthermore, He bears them at God's instigation. He is the servant of God. He has willingly chosen that office. As a consequence of this, because He pours out His soul unto death for man and in obedience to God, God highly exalts Him. He raises Him to kingship. The slain Lamb ascends the throne. He divides the spoil with the strong. Now, that was the great picture which the writer of the fifty-third of Isaiah painted for his age. He hung it up in their memories and their hopes.

I wish in this chapter rapidly to traverse the ages through which this picture moves forward to

its fulfilment. Like all great ideals, a long, long time lay between the conception and its realisation. Five centuries passed before the sublime Figure took life and stepped down out of the framework of prophecy into the actual visible world of living men and women. That, I say, is always the way. A long interval intervenes between the first promulgation of a great idea and its realisation. He who throws out such into the community has often to wait years and years before he gets it accepted. Indeed not seldom he is dead for generations before men are won to its side. "Probably the most wonderful building in the world is the Cathedral of Cologne. Hundreds of years ago some man now forgotten (for history often does not know the names of its greatest makers)—some unknown man—framed the idea of it in his head, and longed to make it visible in stone, but because it was so great and good when the man died his work was still unfinished. It was still unfinished when his name was forgotten. At last, even the design of it was lost, and there was no hope that the cathedral would ever get done. But when Napoleon went storming through Europe his marshals lighted by chance on this old lost design of the cathedral. It was hidden in some dusty corner of a monastery. So it got back again

to Cologne, and in after centuries the magnificent structure received its topstone a few years ago." That is an illustration of what is constantly taking place. A long, long time elapses between the conception and the consummation. There is a struggle through dark days, and fearful hindrances to get it built, to get it accepted, to get it honoured in the community or the nation. And sometimes it seems impossible. It is driven back and down below the surface of the national consciousness and thought, and then some Napoleon comes storming through the world, upheaving old customs and habits, and the lost or forgotten idea appears again on the surface, and men are ready to hear it and to execute it. Thus has it been with ever so many reforms : with the overthrow of slavery,, with the present battle against the liquor traffic with religious movements, with great political and social questions. And there never was a better illustration of this same truth than is supplied by the evolution of the lamb that is embodied in this fifty-third of Isaiah. The prophet, whose very name is unknown to us (for though the title Isaiah is given to the whole book, it is pretty certain that the latter half of it was not written by the man whose name it bears), lights this vision in the nation's life. He died, and the world had

to wait for about five hundred years before it saw its fulfilment. Through all that long interval the world was getting ready for it. It was not realised before, for "the fulness of time" had not come, and it was not ready to receive it or understand it. Now, it would be an interesting thing to trace the process by which the nation was got ready for the Advent of this Redeemer, the Lamb of God who is to take the place of the literal lamb from the hillside, and whose outline the prophet gives us in this fifty-third of Isaiah. But I can only indicate in the briefest way the lines along which the development ran. Broadly speaking, these were three—law, prophecy, and history. First there was law. As time went on laws multiplied. That is the sign of the decay of life. Life that is strong and true is a law to itself. Laws are only for the lawless. Well, in Israel's history, as the years went by, its legal system grew and grew. The age of the scribes and the rabbis came. Endless commentaries were added to the words of Moses and the Old Testament legislation, till a man could hardly lift his hand or wink his eye without breaking a law. Yet this had its good side. St. Paul says, "The law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ." It was this in two ways. First, it trained to

obedience. It taught the will to comply scrupulously with a rigorous imperial authority, but that could not take place without another thing following. This, namely: the law discovers the sin within. It discloses it in its strength and subtilty. It reveals in the inner citadel of life a disinclination to truth and holiness. "I had not known sin," says St. Paul, "had not the law said, Thou shalt not covet." But with this discovery came another; laws are powerless to reform. The law can imprison rebels. It cannot make patriots. It can shut up shops on a Sunday. It cannot create reverence for the Sabbath and the God of the Sabbath. And so of the huge legal system which multiplied and overgrew the Mosaic legislation during the five centuries that elapsed after Isaiah's time till the advent of Christ the main issue was this: It schooled the will to obey, but it revealed the hopelessness of regeneration that way. The other element of the law was that which grew out of the sense of inward evil. Sacrifice was already discredited. The Epistle to the Hebrews states the evolution of thought in regard to it. It was borne in upon the consciousness slowly that the sacrificial system could not terminate in itself. It was seen that the blood of bulls and of goats had



in itself no ethical value. It was impotent to take away sin, to cleanse the heart, or speak peace to the conscience. Yet, as the demands of the law widened and deepened, this necessity became more and more clamant. The law revealed the dangerous secrets of the unsanctified nature, the deep-rooted character of sin. The sacrificial system grew less and less adequate to answer these needs.

Now, along with this internal preparation another line advances externally through history. Prophecy falls silent. After the death of Malachi no one arises to fill the great succession of the man who voiced God. For four hundred years the silence remains unbroken, then John the Baptist appears on the Jordan banks. Furthermore, in this interval the nation is cast again into the crucible of suffering. Conqueror after conqueror strides through the land—the Persian, the Greek, the Roman. The great sacrificial system, which had its centre at Jerusalem, is broken down. The people are scattered north, south, east, and west. The synagogues here and there take the place of the great central temple at Jerusalem, and thus the old sacrificial system loses its centre of unity, and fades into the background. At the end of this long and awful schooling blossoms forth

THE NEW BRITAIN

LIBRARY

NEW YORK

the Pharisee and the Sadducee and the Scribe, who watched for their Messiah, and slew Him when He came.

Now, I want to make a direct application of all this at two points. When the fulness of time came there were two classes of people who were watching and waiting for Christ. There was the class represented by Simeon and Anna. There was another class, by far the larger. They were on the look-out for something, they did not very well know what. They were restless and unsatisfied in their religion. They were the pioneers of God. There was the picture of a coming Redeemer, but somehow it was all on paper for them. They could not get near the picture. They could not feel its reality and its power upon them. Now, I think there are large numbers in the Christian Church like that still. Christ has come. Here is the record of Him. It lies behind us. We turn and look at it. Yet, what is it for many of us? It is nothing more than a mere historic picture. Somehow Christ, the living Christ, is far off from us. We try to realise Him in our mind and heart, but it is not personal. It is like looking at a picture. It is not warm. It is not vital. It is not near, and real, and living. People come to me sometimes and say, "I believe all you tell me

about Christianity, about Christ. I believe that He lived, and died, and rose again. I believe in His incarnation, and in His atonement. But somehow they are no more than propositions, than doctrines. They do not stir my life. I do not feel their force. I do not realise like other people that I am saved." Well, what you want to do is just to go on accepting and obeying what Christ tells you. Listen to His Word, and throw yourself out in trust on Him, and the feelings will come in due course. The disciples themselves did not start with feelings. They started with obedience. They kept Christ company for three years, and what were their feelings? What did they feel that awful day when the arresting band came to take their Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane? What did they feel many a time during the three preceding years of education in His company? If they had grounded their hopes on their feelings, where would they have been? though indeed that is just what they did do for a while. They listened to their feelings. What then? They all forsook Him and fled. When disaster overtook them it was in listening to their own hearts, and not to Christ's words. But the day came when all this was changed. It was the Day of Pentecost. After the Spirit entered into them their knowledge

burst out into flame. There was no more question about feeling. Reason and feeling henceforward united in one stream and made a common current.

The second point is this. Those for whom that great picture in the fifty-third of Isaiah was painted died and never saw its realisation. Generations came and went, and still it hung in the air. The masses of the people and the rulers drifted from it, misconstrued it, disbelieved it. Only a faithful few, like Simeon and Anna and the shepherds, held on to the hope and kept their eyes open and alert for the dawn of day. And at last it came. At last the aged saints took the newborn Christ in their withered arms, and gave thanks. Their eyes saw the fulfilment. Their souls welcomed Him at whose feet prophecy laid down its crown. It was a long wait through those dreary centuries. It was a tremendous strain on faith. Blessed were they who endured to the end. And now behind us lie eighteen centuries. The Figure in the prophet's picture has taken form, has lived, has fulfilled the prophecy. Eighteen hundred years has the verification of his words been going forward. Much has been realised in experience: His power to bear away sin, His power to fill the heart, to present an ideal to life, to uphold, to inspire, to

create passion and sacrifice and love. All this has been verified, but there is much still that belongs to the future. "We see not yet all things put under Him." He is Himself invisible. He has withdrawn from our sight. He has given us only promises of victory, of conquest, of a second coming. But all this belongs to the future. And here emerges the test of our faith. It is precisely the same as that through which the Jewish people lived in those five centuries that lie between Isaiah and the crucifixion. We have more grounds than they to believe Christ, to keep hope alive, to trust in His word. But yet the strain is great. Round about us, as about the faithful Jew, is a world all moving the opposite way. The trend of thought seems to set in a contrary direction. Politics will have nothing to do with the kingship of Christ. Thinkers, the scientist, the statesman, bow Him and His ideals out of the road. They are not practical. The invisible is the unreal.

"Our Lord is now rejected,  
And by the world disowned ;  
By the many still neglected,  
And by the few enthroned ;  
But soon He'll come in glory  
The hour is drawing nigh,  
For the crowning day is coming  
By and by."

That is the strain that is put on our faith. Can we stand it?

“Canst thou love Me  
When creeds are breaking,  
Old landmarks shaking  
With wind and sea?  
Canst thou restrain the earth from quaking,  
And rest thy heart in Me?”

If we cannot, then there is nothing before us but disquiet and defeat. If we cannot, then we must join the long procession of those who in the ages past have sought the young child's life, their procession into death and forgetfulness. But if we can, we may not indeed gain the world, but the world will not gain us. It belongs to the order that is perishing, but we belong to an order that is eternal. There will be no terror possible for us. The dissolution of established things may surprise us, but it will not overwhelm us. It will only tell us that our redemption draweth nigh. We shall go out to meet it not with sadness or fear, but as Christ Himself pictured, “with the merry music of a wedding march. We shall lift up our heads with joy to greet it when the last advent lightens from east and west.”

## IX

“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!”

JOHN I. 29; GENESIS XXII. 8.

I ONCE stood in the valley of the Rees River at the head of Lake Wakatipu, and looked up at the great glacier heights of Mount Earnslaw. Far away up across the mountain brow innumerable rills and streams of water were pouring like silver bars down towards the pine forests that climb the mountain-side. Across wide widths of snow and ice they converged their multitudinous rills, and by the time they had reached the forests they had united their streams into one great current. This comes tumbling down, forming the beautiful Lennox Waterfall, and then leaping forth it hurries away hence to the plain, singing the song of liberty and life. That is where we find ourselves. We

have been watching the number and wonder of these rites of sacrifice that took their rise away up among the head-waters of human history. We have been following the main current down, or perhaps we should say the current that found the sea in the man Christ Jesus. We have watched the converging of the streams of thought regarding sacrifice. We have seen them flowing in round one great central idea. We have seen them being gradually withdrawn from human sacrifice, then gathering round one animal after another, till at last one drew to the front, and becomes supreme. Then the animal disappearing and emerging into a man. First, Moses drew the line round vegetable and animal sacrifices. He excluded for ever human sacrifices. Among the animal, one at length is disentangled out of the mass and gets a primary significance. It is the lamb. Every day for centuries the blood of the lamb was shed on Jewish altars. Then after a time men lost the primary significance of this. They came to think that the animal in itself somehow had a certain special virtue, and if they increased the offerings they increased the virtue. Then their poets and prophets came and showed them that sacrifice depended on the spirit and nature of the offerer, and not on the expensiveness or multitude of the



offerings. And so emphasis was gradually drawn from the animal, until at length the animal itself disappears, and the prophecy of a mysterious Man takes its place. The diverging streams meet in this prophecy. Man listened to the music of the united current. Then it disappears from view like some of the rivers of the Australian Continent. It seems to lose itself underground. The voice of prophecy falls silent, and no further advent news is heard of Him whom Isaiah saw led as a lamb to the slaughter. Four centuries pass and then the silence is broken. Once more the voice of prophecy is heard. The last of the great succession appears on the Jordan banks. He appears to utter one great word, "Behold the Lamb of God!" With the utterance of that he too disappears. His work is done. He is the last and greatest of that great band that kept the consciousness of the race alive. He stands before us on the heights of prophecy, a striking, sublime figure in the sunset of the old faith, tinged with the light of its dying glory. "Behold the Lamb of God!" When John had delivered that message his star goes down. "Behold the Lamb of God!" Here at last the wide apart rills and streams meet and mingle. They leap to their goal. The long evolution of the ages of animal sacrifices finds its culmination

at last in a living Person—"Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" Now, we shall divide this text into two. We shall consider in this chapter the first clause.

"Behold the Lamb of God!"

What does this tell us to look at? One thing that was associated with the lamb in the sacrifices of which it was the centre was innocence. Innocence belongs conceivably to two stages of life. We speak of the innocence of a child. We do not mean, if we understand our words, that it is free from sin. We mean that it has not yet actually done wrong. But in the case of Christ, we mean something more than that. We mean that His life was so guarded that it arrived in this world immaculate, that there was no stain of sin in the original life or in the blood and flesh with which it clothed itself. This rests on the testimony of the record here, but it is also an inference from the life itself. For Christ's innocence was not the innocence of tested character. There is a negative innocence relatively speaking. It is the innocence of the child that has not yet faced temptation; and very beautiful it is. As has been said by Dr. Robertson Nicoll, "Innocence has something strange and wonderful about it. It has a look of exile as of something heavenly detained on earth,

a look of peril and of helplessness, such as we sometimes see in children." But as children emerge into manhood, this passes, and it is one of the sore regrets of life that it comes back no more. You remember the beautiful sonnet in which Charles Lamb utters his grief for the loss of innocence. It must voice the feelings of many—

"We were two pretty babes ; the youngest she—  
The youngest, and the loveliest far (I ween),  
And innocence her name. The time has been  
We two did love each other's company ;  
Time was we two had wept to have been apart.  
But when by show of seeming good beguiled,  
I left the garb and manners of a child,  
And my first love for man's society,  
Defiling with the world my virgin heart—  
My lov'd companion dropt a tear, and fled,  
And hid in deepest shades her awful head.  
Beloved, who shall tell me, where thou art,  
In what delicious Eden to be found ?  
That I may seek thee, the wide world round."

Now, that was the test that Christ never needed. Why? Because He never lost innocence. He went down among the sins and temptations of life, but He came out of them pure and unsoiled. We call tried innocence holiness. Christ was sinless. That is the marvel of this Lamb of God. The animal was innocent, but it was an untried and

unmoral innocence. But this Lamb is not only innocent, it is perfectly holy. Think of the wonder of the fact. It was utterly alien to Hebrew thought. The Old Testament saints were never tired of dwelling on the awful distance that separated man from God. The idea of any man claiming freedom from sin would have been blasphemy to them. Neither was the idea existing anywhere else. Paganism never entertained the conception. Even their gods were not sinless beings, and as for man, they knew it was a dream even to imagine such a thing. Now, have you ever thought what it signifies to have one man of the race absolutely free from sin, a perfect manhood? What does it mean that we have a perfect standard of weights and measures, a High Court of Justice, and a fixed and settled measure of time? What would it mean if there were no such things? If the hours were one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow, if the sun rose at irregular intervals which nobody could calculate, that there was no fixed standard of measure or value, that there was no settled principle or place of justice? It would mean chaos in commerce, and in social and national life. That is the necessity of an absolute standard by which everything else can be measured and regulated according to its nature and sphere. Well, that is

what it signifies to have one life perfect, absolutely holy, entirely free from sin. That is Christ's. Think what it would signify if that was non-existent. Think what it would involve if He were sinful like ourselves, if He were flawed, imperfect. It is in the supreme fact that He is not our hope rests. Christ is either sinless or sinful. Between sinfulness and sinlessness there is no middle term. The quantity of sin is not the point. It is its existence. Should the denier be able to make good one single charge against the moral perfection of Christ, the whole theory of salvation vanishes like a dream. Christ drops down into our own ranks. Instead of a Redeemer, He Himself needs redemption like the rest. Man's faith is faith in a holy Christ, or we are yet in our sins.

The second point about the lamb was its gentleness. It is the perfect type of meek, uncomplaining suffering. Christ's gentleness was wonderful. It is wonderful because it was not the outcome either of necessity or of weakness. A person is sometimes tolerant because he is morally indifferent. He manifests no anger or passion because he does not feel or see wrong. But Christ was not that. His gentleness was not the outcome of insensibility, of a mere ignorant good-nature. His holiness made it impossible for Him to be ignorant of sin, made it

inevitable that He should see sin with clearer eyes than the sinner himself. Neither was it born from necessity. People are sometimes gentle because they must. They endure and suffer in silence because they say, "Well, we cannot help it; it is best to be quiet and resigned." That was not Christ's case either. The assumption of the New Testament is that Christ could help it. That He had only to speak, and legions of angels would leap to His command. Now, through the windows of His gentleness and purity you get a glimpse of the superiority of His suffering. His sensitiveness and His sinlessness must have increased its horror. For it is the good, and the holy, and the gentle who comprehend clearest the sinfulness of sin. There are natures so coarsened with wrong-doing that they can endure pain without feeling it much. As you come up from the animal, as life refines and increases in nervous organism, pain increases also, till when it is inflicted by sin on a pious and holy soul it becomes a maddening torture. "Behold the Lamb of God!" Behold Him in His innocence, in His gentleness, in His holiness. But further, what was in John's mind when he uttered these words was not so much the character of the Lamb—innocence, holiness, sinlessness, gentleness—it was death. It is beyond all doubt that he connected

Christ with the sacrifices of the old constitutions. Here at last they found their fulfilment. Here at last the type was completed in the antitype. Of this, I shall have occasion to speak again. I will only mention therefore one or two things in connection with it. First of all, and supremest of all, the Lamb is no unwilling victim. That was the weak spot in all preceding sacrifices. The creature went to death reluctantly. It was forced to its doom. Therefore its death in itself had no moral significance. But the remarkable thing about the death of the Lamb of God is that it is purely voluntary. From very early in His career Christ saw where He was going. It was no blind groping that ended accidentally or necessarily in the cross. He carried the cross on His heart long before it was laid on His shoulders. All His wanderings, like a bird circling round her nest, only narrowed the circle at whose centre stood Calvary. He foresaw it all. He told His disciples of it all. He told them of it all long before it came to pass, and they would not believe and could not comprehend. He did. They tried to seduce Him from the idea to turn Him aside from His accepted doom, but He would not. He ordered one of His beloved disciples behind Him as an emissary of the devil when he suggested such a thing. He turned away

from him, and steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. You must keep that in mind if you will understand the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. There are, as one has said, various types of death. There is the death of the good, the death when the soul surrenders itself into the hands of God. There is another kind of death. It is the death of Gordon of Khartum, it is the death of the hero. There is a third. Literature has never forgotten Socrates in the Agora of Athens. It is a beautiful scene. The Grecian sage has been sentenced to death on a false charge. He is to be his own executioner, and the great old man talks calmly to his disciples, settles his earthly affairs, says goodbye to one after another, then takes the cup of poison and drinks it, and all is over. Or yet, once more, yonder in a Chinese town a Chinese Christian sinks beneath the stones of the mob. "Are you sorry?" asks the missionary. "Sorry! Oh no," he says. "How glad! Only sorry that I have done so little for Jesus." These are the types of death as the world gives them. They are the deaths of the good, the heroic, the sage, the martyr. Christ's was not like any of these. Or rather it takes up and comprehends all these. There is one thing common to them all. They had to be. But Christ's was predicted. Christ's



was foreseen. Christ's was deliberately accepted. Death did not choose Him. He chose death. He met it at the trysting-place where He and not death determined, and He went to the cross, though legions of angels were waiting to bear Him away from it. That makes His death unique in the world.

And now, the last point—"Behold the Lamb of God!" Put emphasis on the last words, "*of God.*" There you strike the distinctive feature of this sacrifice, and of the religion which it created. The difference between Christianity and all other religions lies in these two words. In other religions man provides his sacrifice for his god. In Christianity God provides the sacrifice for man. Christ comes forth out of the heart of God. Shall we not indeed say He is God? Here is where a devastating error has crept in. Men have talked and written as if somehow God and Christ were divided, as if somehow Christ propitiated God, and won Him the mercy. Nowhere in Scripture is there any such statement made. It is a heathen importation. A man said to me once, "Oh, God will do nothing for us. Our only hope is in Christ." What a dreadful travesty of the truth! God and Christ are one in this supreme work. The Father sends the Son, and the Son issues forth gladly out

of the Father's heart. The two are an absolute unity in working out man's salvation. Here is the everlasting proof of the love of God. Men say God is loving, and therefore He does not need to be propitiated. The New Testament says, "God is Love," and therefore He himself provides a propitiation. Why it was necessary to provide such a propitiation from the Godward side we do not know fully. It leads away into the mysteries which are beyond our fathoming. From the manward side, as we shall see at another time, it is a sublime and glorious gospel. If the mercy of God is obtainable irrespective of Christ's work, if man can go to God as a child goes to its father, and be received and accepted on its own repentance, then Christ's life and death are absolutely meaningless. They are worse. They are a tragedy that fills me with dismay and despair.

Let me end at a point which we reached a little while ago. I said that as you come up the stages of life increase of organisation means increase of capacity for pain. Therefore it is the highest who suffer the most.

At the top of these stand the morally pure, the intensely spiritual, and crowning these is Christ. "Behold the Lamb of God!" Now, from this point let us apply a test to ourselves.

It will tend to throw light on our spiritual condition. Think of how we regard the pain-stricken. "Men," says Dr. Robertson Nicoll, "must become strangely hardened before they cease to respond to the suffering of a helpless, innocent being. To torture a child is an idea so sickening that the mind revolts from it. The legend of one such incident haunts the heart for generations; and this reaches its culmination in Christ. The tortured innocent manifests love in its agony when it thinks, and forgives and prays for those who do it to death." Now, we are warranted in taking these ideas and transferring them to Christ. He was more innocent than any child, more loving, more gentle, and by the constraint of His love more helpless than any other could be, and it was He whom men chose and did to death in agony and shame. It is true you or I did not actually participate in that physical murder, that mangling of the body eighteen centuries ago; but this is also true, that the very same passions, and greeds, and desires, and sins, and unbelief that enacted that tragedy are as strong and as stern within us all. He is being crucified afresh every day. For it is impossible to think that the mere physical suffering on a cross was the essential agony in the soul of the Son of God. This, then, is the end

of human nature apart from God. This is what sin does. That is its awfulness and its guilt. In that crime we all had a share, for it is a crime repeated in all its essence when the vision of it does not break the heart and become a new affection in the life. In the cross, looked at from this point of view, we have the culmination and condemnation of human guilt. And were this the only point in view it would fill us with horror and despair. That is the test, then—"Behold the Lamb of God!" How does the vision of the suffering of the innocent and the holy for you and me effect our heart? Do we feel it as we would feel the suffering of an innocent child? If not, why not?

## X

### THE SIN-BEARING LAMB

JOHN I. 29.

IN the last chapter I considered the first clause of this verse. We saw its position in the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb. Here the meeting streams of sacrifice united. Here the prophecy of the writer of the 53rd of Isaiah has its fulfilment. The literal lamb of sacrifice passed over into a man. And here is the point of actual transition. Here is where the lamb from the hillside finally disappears. It disappears because it is fulfilled. The type is swallowed up in the antitype. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" Before we pass on we must say something regarding the second clause of this verse.

First of all, what is the sin of the world?

We must find that out before we can see how Christ takes it away. The sin of the world here

does not refer to the extent of the sin. It refers to the character of the sin. The word is one of John's words. It appears on almost every page of his writings. It stands there prominently both in his Gospel and in his Epistles. What, then, was his conception of the world? There are two words in Scripture used to denote the world. There is the word "kosmos." This means the world under the condition of space. There is the word "æon" which means the world under the condition of time. The latter word is translated sometimes "age" or "epoch" or "dispensation," and it is this word that is used and never the other when the end of the world is spoken of. But the other word "kosmos" is the word referred to here. What is its meaning? Its first and earliest meaning is the sum total of material things, their order, beauty, symmetry, law. But this world is never represented as sinful, only as unmoral. Then into this framework of kosmos man is set. It was made for him. It was kept in existence for him, and so the world comes to mean next the material universe of which man is the moral centre. Then it comes to be applied to the men themselves, the sum total of humanity who live and move and have their being in this material framework. But man takes the world

and uses it without reference to the Giver. He was put into it as a steward, but instead of faithfully recognising the true owner, he takes the proceeds for his own purposes. Hence comes the next idea of the world. It is humanity separated from God. From separation the next step is easy. It is hostility. Thus the last stage of the world is humanity separated, hostile, rebellious against God. That is sin. That is the sin of the world. Observe in what its essence consists. It consists in omitting God from its life. It consists in forgetting, ignoring, denying, defying God. Get hold of that truth, and never let it go. The Bible never wavers in representing this as the essence and origin of all sin. We sometimes speak of sin as drunkenness, or lust, or murder, or theft, or covetousness, or lying. These are rather crimes or vices. They are related to sin as the fruit is related to the tree, or the plant is related to the root. They are not so much sin as the last fruitage of sin. Sin itself lies deeper. It lies in "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." The Bible never wavers, I say, in that analysis of sin. You remember the typical illustration of it which Christ used. You remember the story of the Prodigal. You see the development going on. You see the young fellow slipping

down and down till at last he reaches the level of the animal. We have seen characters reaching that stage. We have seen them going out from home and prayer, and truth, and purity, and down into the bog of the senses, down to where the human is drowned in the brute; and at last darkness is the burier of the dead. But the point is this: What does Christ say is the origin of it all? Where does its beginning lie? It lies, he says, in the life omitting God, and setting up on its own account. That was where sin took its rise. All that followed was only the fruit of which this is the seed. But that is not always the issue. Christ drew another picture of a successful man, a man who prospered and did well, and made a fortune and retired. What did he say about him? He said his loss was just the same. The Prodigal and the rich farmer both were fools. Why? Because both omitted God from their lives, because both took their lives in their own hands to manage them as they pleased. We cannot do that without becoming the enemy of God. There are two rival claimants for man's allegiance—God, and he whom Christ called "the Prince of this World." When a man separates himself from God he comes under the power of His great rival. He may not think so. He may not desire it, but that does not



alter the fact ; and the fact is he passes over into the camp of the enemy. He becomes a rebel against God. For there can be no neutrality. A poet's saying that he was "neither for God nor for His enemy" is an impossible position in a moral world.

That, then, is sin. It is the omission of God out of the life. It is the sundering of ourselves from the thought, the word, the will, the life, the communion, the worship, the service of God. Everything else comes out of that. That is the fountain whence issues the vice, the pain, the sorrow, and the wrongs of the world.

Now, a world thus lying in sin lies also under condemnation. What is this condemnation ? "The wages of sin is death." That is where Christ begins. That is what brought Him out from God. He comes to save a "lost" world, a world that is under the judgment of death, death spiritual and death eternal. He comes to bear away the sin of this world, and He has done it. That is my second point. How He has done it is a vast, deep question. We will leave it alone for the present. It is the fact that is of concern. The theory or explanation of the fact is interesting, but it is not necessary to salvation. Now, I say Christ has taken away the sin of the world.

Let us look at an incident in His career that throws this fact into prominence. Enter the Garden of Gethsemane yonder. You remember the scene. Christ is bound with grief, is shaken with some overmastering sorrow. He asks to be delivered from it. He wrestles in prayer. His agony is awful. It makes him sweat great drops of blood down to the ground. What does it mean? Why is He filled with terror and dismay? Is it the thought of death, of the torture of the morrow? Why, many have faced crueller deaths than his and not quailed. Fear of death? Why should He fear death? What had He done to make death dreadful to Him? Done? He had lived, as we saw in our last chapter, a marvellous life, a life free from sin, a life which to this hour stands flawless in the fierce light which criticism beats upon it. If any man in this world ever lived

“A life which dares send a challenge to the end,  
And when it comes, says, Welcome, friend,”

Christ did that ; and if any man might face the future, might go fearlessly into the presence of God, Christ was that man. Afraid of death, of the sufferings of to-morrow? Nonsense. Hundreds have faced equal or worse tortures, and never

quailed. Hundreds have gone to martyrdom of a direr kind without a tremor, nay, with exultation, with songs of triumph on their lips. Is Christ to be less than these, the best of men, and yet feebler than a feeble woman? Afraid of death? Why, think of what death must have meant for Him. It was a release from a life of strife and toil and persecution and unbelief, and it was the entrance—to what? To the union with God and the eternal peace and joy of His Father's home. Death to Him of all men must have been infinite gain. Why should He shrink from it, or ask that its cup might pass? Christian thought has but one answer to that question. It is the sin of the world. He was taking on Himself the whole accumulated guilt of humanity, and atoning for it. The poet rightly interprets it:—

"'Tis midnight, and on Olive's brow  
The star is dimmed that brightly shone;  
'Tis midnight in the garden now,  
The suffering Saviour prays alone.

'Tis midnight, and from all removed  
The Saviour wrestles lone with fears;  
Even that disciple whom He loved  
Hides in his Master's grief and tears.

'Tis midnight, and for others' guilt  
The Man of Sorrows weeps in blood;  
Yet He who hath in anguish knelt  
Is not forsaken of His God.

'Tis midnight, and from other plains  
Is borne the song that angels know ;  
Unheard by mortals are the strains  
That sweetly soothe the Saviour's woe."

Yes, that is the only explanation that does justice to the facts of the case. If that be not so, then that Agony in the Garden, and that cry of desolation on the cross, fills me with terror and dismay. That is the assumption, then, on which the New Testament proceeds. But the fact has its verification in experience. We turn and interrogate the consciousness of those who have beheld the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. What is their testimony? Their testimony is that He has done it for them. Remember what the sin of the world is. Remember the special nature of it. It is the omission of God from the life. It is the life taking itself in its own hands, holding to its own desires, following its own will, doing its own work. In one word, it is life making itself its centre, ignoring, neglecting, separating itself from God, the only true centre of being. Well, the testimony of hundreds and thousands in every age and every condition of life is that sin has been broken, has been borne away from them. Think of that for a minute. Sin, any sort of sin, reports itself under two aspects—power and guilt. First

power. When a man begins to try to do right he is conscious of weakness, he is conscious that there are forces within him that hold him back and break him down. Suppose a man wishes to reinstate God in his life and his love. It is a terrible struggle, but one day he sees the cross, he sees Christ. One day it is borne in upon him that while Christ suffers, He suffers for him. One day he learns, no matter how, that that innocent, holy Being goes to the cross for him. One day he realises, as St. Paul realised, that this is the Son of God who loved him and who gave Himself for him. The power of sin is broken. Do you wonder that it should? I said in the last chapter that suffering innocence has an extraordinary effect upon other lives. The torture of a helpless child rouses the emotion to white heat. It maddens us. It forces us up out of our ease and our indolence and our selfishness, and becomes often a redeeming passion in the soul.

“And Christ, the innocent, the holy, the voluntary  
victim *for me*,  
Three-and-thirty years of toil, and torture, and infamy,  
and insult,  
Crowned by the cross—all that *for me*.”

Do you wonder that when this lays hold of men and women it should break the back of selfishness,

make them resolve no longer to live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again? No, the wonder is that they should do anything else. "The ethical and philosophical teacher," says Dr. Dale, "may discourse on the evil of sin. He may appeal to the conscience to condemn it as a violation of the august and eternal law of righteousness. He may warn men of the physical miseries which avenge some forms of vice. He may give vivid representations of the wretchedness in families, and the confusion and disorder in the state which are the inevitable results of indolence, covetousness, falsehood, treachery. It is all true, and it may be very impressive. But Christianity, while it says all this, says also that Christ the eternal Son of God has died for the sins of man. This has been a more effective force in constraining man to abhor sin and to forsake it."

"It breaks the power of cancelled sin,  
And sets the sinner free."

But there is more and greater than this. Sin not only reports itself as a power in the life: it reports itself as guilt in the conscience. What an awful thing is this sense of guilt! Under it men

have done their best and their basest deeds. It has filled the world with altars and flooded them with blood. It is the deepest and most terrifying force in human nature. Well, the power of sin may be broken, but the past is there, and it testifies to the guilt. What is to be done with that? Forget it? You cannot. The more you try, the more insistent it becomes. You have done wrong in the past. You have injured another. You have stained, you have ruined a life. But suppose they forgive you, what then? You do not forgive yourself. You cannot. Conscience has no power to forgive till an adequate atonement is made. No, the more others forgive you, the deeper becomes your own sense of ill-desert. Thus—

“The dead hours far away,  
Which we baptize with the ethereal name of yesterday,”

come back and clutch us with their awful fingers. What is the reason of this? What is this thing we call conscience that persists in blaming when we sin, and will not be pacified even when those we sinned against forgive us frankly and fully? It is God within us. Conscience is the meeting-place between us and Him. It is the spot where He comes into touch with us. It is the throne within

us on which He sits ; and the blame that we feel and the remorse that stings, and the shame which shakes us are the echoes of His voice uttering its judgments within ; and no blood of bulls or goats, no escape to heaven or hell, can silence that awful witness of guilt. Well now, here is the marvellous thing. When the eyes are opened to see the Lamb of God this consciousness of guilt vanishes. It slips off like a fevered dream, and leaves the life free, clean, unremorseful, buoyant. The sins remain as facts of history, and their results may remain, and conscience will still condemn them as before, but it ceases to condemn the sinner. This is a wonderful experience, says Dr. Dale. No one who has not passed through it can imagine its blessedness. It is an experience that seems impossible until it is actually known, and then the reality of it is one of the great certainties and one of the great joys of life. When I discover that I am forgiven, I still condemn my sin, condemn it perhaps more sternly than ever. I see that it was inexcusable. I can feel as I never felt before that it justly deserves the Divine indignation and wrath, but when my eyes are opened to see Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, the guilt of sin crushes me no longer. I come to realise that God is at peace with me.



He is at peace not on account of my sacrifices or repentances, but on account of the sacrifice of His own eternal and well-beloved Son who loved me and gave Himself for me. Do you ask how this can be? I do not fully know. I do not think any theory as yet has fathomed all the mysteries of the atoning efficacy of the Lamb of God. In any case it would be no use just now at the end of this lecture attempting to formulate a theory. I am only desirous to emphasise the fact. Is it not enough to know the fact? Sixty generations of Christian believers rise to attest it. They write it in biographies. They tell it in speech. They sing it in song. What is this book here but the sound of this great music? It is the centre from which it starts and soars, and to which it is ever returning. It unites together Roman Catholics like Newman and Faber with Protestants like Bonar and Baxter and Doddridge. However wide apart their doctrinal beliefs, they are at one in singing—

“He maketh the rebel a priest and a king,  
He hath bought us and taught us this new song to sing,  
Unto Him that hath loved us and washed us from sin,  
Unto Him be the glory, for ever, Amen.”

But my closing point is this. It is the fact and

not the theory that is of consequence for you and me. I think it certain that I may be speaking to some who feel either the guilt or the power of sin, or both. Well, the Christian preacher has only one word for you. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" All preaching is only an effort to utter that in one form or another. Do you want to know how it is possible? What if I could not tell? You want to go to Mornington<sup>1</sup> by the cable cars. Can you explain the force that draws them? Will you wait till you understand the nature of steam and the machinery it uses before you trust yourself to them? You want to use the telegraph to send a message of sympathy or a sum of money to a relative who is in sorrow or want. Do you comprehend the nature of the electric fluid that is waiting to run with your message, and will you delay sending it till you do? You are hungry or thirsty, dying for want of food or drink. Here are both. Will you refuse them till you comprehend the chemical constituents of water, or the means by which the grain from the hillside is turned into the bread that delivers from starvation? Is the experience of others, hundreds of thousands, not enough to assure you in venturing even although

<sup>1</sup> In Dunedin.

you do not understand all? "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." That is the gospel. That is the good news from heaven. It comes as an offer, as a gift. It is ours only to put aside prejudice, and unwillingness, and indifference, and embrace the offer, and receive the gift. This is what amazed the Son of God, that men dying should refuse the means of life, that men under the guilt and bondage of sin should decline deliverance. Their unbelief filled Him with dismay. Let it not be said of any of us as of those of old, "He marvelled at their unbelief." For unbelief seals us up in sin, and delivers us to the death eternal, from which the Son of God came to set us free.

## XI

### THE FORE-ORDAINED LAMB

I PETER I. 19, 20.

“Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.”

THIS subject takes us away back beyond time and history. If I had followed the logical order, it ought perhaps to have come first in this series. But I have been following the evolution of the Lamb in history rather than in thought. So it meets us here in the course of that history. It will be as well, therefore, to take it in its place as it offers itself to us in the record here. And so it comes up for consideration at this point.

It goes without saying that it is a profound thing. It takes us away into the unfathomable

abysses of eternity. It is high beyond our utmost reach of thought. Yet that is no reason why we should pass it by. Indeed, we cannot. For the human mind is so constituted that it will ask questions relating to the origin of things. Nor need we be so shy of it as unpractical because it is so high. Why, the high things of life are mostly the practical things of life. The sky is high over our heads, but what would life be without it? The sun is millions of miles beyond our reach, but how should we do our work, how should we even exist at all if it were not for the life which his light pours down upon us? It is the same in the world of thought. The practical people are not those who concern themselves with little ideas. They are those who concern themselves with great. It is the largest knowledge that can best instruct the most complete ignorance. The smallest duty is best fulfilled when brought in under the sweep of the loftiest principles. What life needs for its life and instruction is not low and commonplace thought. It is high, vast, far-off thought. These act upon the soul as the air on the mountain summit acts upon the body. They arouse, dilate, expand, and inspire it. They give it an atmosphere and a horizon. They redeem it from the littleness and the stuffiness of narrow and cramped surround-

ings. They open on it an outlook and breadth and liberty. And so it is good to turn to lofty thought, even though we may not wholly comprehend it. The sailor steers by the sun and the stars, though he never reaches either, or understands wholly what they are in themselves. How, then, shall we approach this subject? Where shall we get a springboard by which to let ourselves off into the infinite sea? We shall begin with this. Try to imagine the universe non-existent. Before time was, or matter, or space, or things seen and temporal, God existed. And if all these were to go into nothingness to-morrow, He would be there just the same, the one supreme, eternal reality. As Emily Brontë sings:—

“With wide embracing love,  
Thy spirit animates eternal years;  
Pervades and broods above,  
Changes, sustains, dissolves,  
Creates, and rears.

Though man and earth were gone,  
And suns and universes ceased to be,  
And Thou wert left alone,  
Every existence would exist in Thee.”

Now, what was God doing in that time? First of all He was not alone. He was not dwelling as

a solitary unrelated existence. That is where the Unitarian logic leads, and it necessarily ends in a religion sterile and cold. One of my old professors, the man to whom I owe more than all the rest put together, Professor Wallace (Belfast), told us one day that his little boy, sitting on his knee in the twilight of a Sabbath evening, asked him once, "Father, what does God do for company?" He said it was that question that first suggested to him the doctrine of the Trinity as a practical truth. Well then, God was not alone. The Divine nature is essentially social. We say that God is an eternal Father. What do we mean when we say that? We must mean, if we mean anything, that fatherhood is of the essence of God. That is, He did not begin to be a Father in time. He was one from all eternity. It follows, therefore, that if He is the eternal Father, there must have been an eternal Son, and so you are conducted by the necessities of reason to the doctrine of the Trinity. It was along these lines that Mr. R. H. Hutton was led out of Unitarianism into Trinitarianism. He gives the account of the evolution of his thought in a very fine essay entitled "The Incarnation and Principles of Evidence." That, however, is not in our order just now. The point we wish to note is that God was

not a solitary existence. The Christ who became incarnate dwelt with God or in God from all eternity. What, then, was God doing? How did He occupy Himself in that prehistoric time? Luther, with his grim humour, says that He spent it in a birch plantation cutting rods to whip the backs of curious people who ask such foolish questions. Well, no doubt there are people who would be none the worse for such a correction. Nevertheless, if asked reverently and not curiously, the question is both a very proper one and, as we shall see, a very practical one as well. The answer which St. Peter gives here—and no doubt he had it from the lips of the Lord Himself—is that He spent it in communion with His Son relative to the Creation and all that creation involved. And so there is our starting-point.

Now, consider next this. Everything at first lives in the mind as a thought. Then it takes form outside. This desk, this church, the train, the house, are only ideas dressed up in wood and stone and iron; and the whole vast universe itself once had no existence save in the mind of God. Yet, away back in that timeless eternity, God was, and Christ was, and in the mind of the Eternal arose the resolve to create. To create involved



the selection of a plan. What was that plan? It was Christ. St. Paul tells us the universe was created in Him and for Him. The springs of life were to be in Christ. He was His archetype according to which it was to be framed, and He, as Dr. Dale explains, undertook the responsibility of His life and its relation to God His Father. He, in short, is what we might call the human element in God, and that element has been in God from all eternity. Is not this what is meant when it is said, "He created man in the image of Himself"? Already, away back in eternity before the first man set foot on this earth, man's pattern existed in the nature of Him who was to make him. There was a union of the human and the Divine, and that union was Christ, and Christ is therefore eternal. Well, the time came when God determined to create according to the eternal type in the person of His eternal Son. Then came the universe, and at last the race of man. Christ was the plan, the type of this creation. He accepted its responsibilities. It existed in Him. It was to illustrate and enjoy His glory and His blessedness. But we know what happened. Man degenerated, went off into sin. Now, the wages of sin was death. This death was not a penalty. It was a consequence. Man was so made that if he sinned

he could not escape by himself the death that by the conditions of his creation was inevitably bound up with sin. But here Christ intervenes. I have said that He undertook the responsibility of the creation. Had man not sinned all the joy and blessedness which He knew would have been shared by the human race. Had the race continued rooted in Him all His life and glory would have flowed into it. It did not. It cut itself asunder from Him. Well, what then? Then the eternal Son of God, who had undertaken the responsibility of the race's creation and blessedness, now undertakes the responsibility of the race's sin and guilt. He was the head of it before it was brought into existence. It was to draw from Him its life, and glory, and righteousness. It failed and fell. But in its transcendent grace He did not repudiate it when it repudiated Him. He united Himself with the diseased and sinful body of humanity. He took, as the head must take in such circumstances, the sufferings and the death of the body. He bore these, and He bore them away, and just as the responsibility for the race's creation was originally in Christ, so now its forgiveness is also in Him, and because of Him. God dealt originally with Christ in creating, now He deals with Him in forgiving and redeeming. But here is the

point: All this is not an after-thought. God is not like some short-sighted artificer who develops his plans according to the development of circumstances which he can neither see nor control. We must never think, though we are very liable to do it, that the coming of Christ and the death of Christ were the consequences of a set of circumstances that had not been foreseen or determined. The night before Waterloo Lord Uxbridge, the chief of Wellington's staff, waited upon the great commander to get from him information regarding the plans of to-morrow. "Who will begin the battle?" said the Iron Duke coldly, "Buonaparte, or I?" "Buonaparte," says Uxbridge. "Well," replied Wellington, "Buonaparte has committed to me nothing of his plans, and as my conduct must be regulated by his, how can I tell you my projects?" Uxbridge bows his head and remains silent. The Iron Duke rose, and, laying his hands on his lieutenant's shoulder, exclaims, "One thing is certain, Uxbridge, that come what may, you and I will do our duty." But no such ignorance as that is possible with God. All is foreseen before anything comes into being. Every movement, every turn of act and thought down to the last moment of recorded time, was known and prepared for by Him. It is

ridiculous and degrading to think that the coming of Christ into the world was only an afterthought to counterwork consequences that had not been foreknown in the counsels of eternity.

Now, the great fact which the creation of free beings necessarily involved was sin. It is natural to conclude, therefore, that God would provide for such a contingency, that His whole plan of government from the very first should have reference to it. How indeed could it be otherwise? The provision of consequences, and the provision for them, are the mark of every plan ordered by intelligence, and when this intelligence is perfect and infinite it will disclose in its original conceptions all that is necessary for the most future events and the most remote issues. And this is just what is involved in the saying that the Lamb was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.

Some implications of this truth.

First of all, see the new and impressive light which it sheds upon the life and death of Christ for human sin. The assumption of the New Testament is that when man sinned and fell from holiness there appeared in the whole universe only One who could and who did undertake the work of his redemption. Christ the incarnate God was

such. He was such by reason of the union of the Divine and the human. Then comes the question, says the late Bishop Brooks, when did that fitness begin? Was it a nature given Him when He was born at Bethlehem? Was it something, an element of life which had never been His before? If so, the atonement becomes a late expedient contrived in time for patching up a breach in God's experiment, a special arrangement for an unseen catastrophe. The precious element of Christ's humanity turns into the tawdry and pitiful consequence of human sin. But take the deeper view. Take the view which is necessarily included in the Lamb fore-ordained from the foundation of the world. Then we are led up to the great thought that this fitness of nature was an everlasting thing in Christ. It was not created. It was only revealed when He was born of a woman. He has borne for ever the human element in His divinity. He has been the anointed Christ from all eternity. There has been a manhood in the Deity, an everlasting readiness that if such a catastrophe as sin occurred, such a remedy as Calvary existed from eternity to counteract it. How immensely this deepens our thoughts of salvation! What an infinite reach of expansion opens up in the saying of the

"Lamb fore-ordained from the foundation of the world"!

But there is more than that. Look at our own lives in the light of this sublime truth. What does it tell us? It tells us this glorious fact, that God did not begin to love us in time. He loved us from all eternity. We were in His thought ages and ages before we came into being. Even Christ Himself did not begin that love for us. It was that love for us that dwelt in His heart from all eternity, and that was manifested in time through Christ. How much must that mean for us when we get a real grip of it? Think of what a long love means in our human relations. The child who sees its father meeting every need as it arises learns something of his power and kindness. But as the child grows to maturity and comes to understand that the gifts which it received were not on its father's part the creation of the moment, but the slowly elaborated products of long years of care and sacrifice, this gives a new impressiveness to the love. Or a maiden some day takes out the white robes that her mother prepared for her before she came into the world. And now that mother is gone, and the maiden takes these little garments in which she lay long ago as an infant. Everything there speaks of the thoughtfulness, the

solicitude, the prevision, the pride, the passion of love. At four years of age she only smiles at them, but at forty or fourscore they touch her with solemn memories. They contain thoughts that do lie too deep for tears ; for they are the silent but eloquent reminders of a love that thought and wrought long before she ever drew breath in the world. Or take human affection. As the years pass it becomes tranquil, and for the most part silent. It is content with the memory of its old sweet times of speech. How often between two who have taken the long path together do the divine words of the prophet express the spirit of their life, " I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest with me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." That is, to put it in other words, when you went with me into the backwoods, into the bush, when you were so brave and faithful, when you bore the strain of toil without a murmur, when the glory of your love heartened me in the hard, poverty-stricken days. When such memories rise in a husband's heart, everything else is forgotten ; " the work of time and toil is undone, and more than the long-vanished loneliness shines from the worn features." The retrospect overflows the present with emotions too deep for

speech. In that fair vision, as it comes close to the life, the sunshine sleeps and the waters sing, and the lawns are green as if it were early morning in Paradise. And the fair, long love of God for us! "The Lamb fore-ordained before the foundation of the world!" how that should fill our life! It is a love that has had no beginning and will have no end. It embraced us ages before we were born. It bore with us and enfolded us in the unlovely days and wandering epochs of our life. He chose us when we were least attractive, "in the furnace of affliction"; and He will be around us and within us till after—

"The sun grows cold,  
And the stars are old,  
And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold."

Can we afford to stand outside such a love as that in a world where love so often deserts and deceives, and so many things conspire to break the heart? If the keeping of this love were in our own hands and dependent on our own efforts, our heart's best treasure would be insecure. But if He has loved us from before the foundation of the world, if He has loved us as bound up in His eternal Son, then who shall separate us from the love of Christ? So runs our dream, so hopes our faith, yet these same



eyes discern a mystery they cannot pierce. They hear of a left hand, and of an awful world of woe where love is not Lord of all.

And so with our heart and mind standing in front of this Lamb fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, think lastly of what it means to wrestle yourself outside of such a life. Let me state it in the apt words of the great preacher already quoted : "A man puts aside the offer of salvation in Christ. What is it he rejects? Is it a sudden thought, some new expedient of God, a hurried plan that was called into existence to-day and may be superseded by another to-morrow? Even if this were all, it would be mad enough. But when I see a man deliberately raising his hand and warding off from his life the operation of One who has been aiming to compass his salvation from all eternity, how shall I utter the fearfulness of his sin and peril? I look back till my mind swims, back into the timeless ages before creation was, and lo, Christ my Saviour is there already with the provision of salvation in His nature. And then I see the world come into existence. I see man spring to life. I see him sin. I see him breed generations of sinners down to this last hour. And then out of the eternal I see the eternal Saviour come. I see Him lay His long-kept mercy on

your soul and mine, that mercy which began with eternity finds in time its purpose. It comes to save you and me. If we will not be saved, if we turn away from this salvation, this Lamb fore-ordained from the foundation of the world, what can I say but that we are offering a deadly insult to God? "How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

## XII

### "THE LAMB OPENING THE SEALED BOOKS"

#### REVELATION V.

A GREAT writer has very truly said that a fine nature is always going back to its childhood. David in his exile longed for a drink of the water of the Well of Bethlehem. None seemed so sweet and so refreshing to him as that which he drank when a boy at his father's home. And so when the old poet comes to sing his sweetest song, the song of his closing life, it is woven out of the memories of the long ago. It breathes of the freshness of the dew, the hills where he wandered with his flock in the far-off days of his youth. It is always so. "Youth hopes, and manhood strives, but age remembers." As we grow old, we like to wander back, grey pilgrims, among the dead hours

far away baptized with the ethereal name of yesterday. Shakespeare represents his gay old courtier Falstaff, when he is dying, returning in memory to the scenes of his childhood. "And a' babbled o' green fields." He was away back among the daisied meadows where first he drew breath as a boy. That is a common experience. As life wears to its close the memories of its childhood gather about it and assume a new pathos and power. "The work of yesterday (says Dr. Martineau) has a dull, far-off look, but the scenes of early days—the school-house whose bell recalled us from our youthful games, the yew-tree path along which we walked arm in arm with comrades now beneath the sod—how touching the recollection of these, how tender the shadows in which they lie, how musical across the silence are the tones they fling! The noise, the care, the passion is gone, and the sunshine sleeps, and the waters murmur, and the lawns are green as if it were early morning in Paradise."

But amid these forgetful memories those which sink deepest are the religious. A recent Shakespearian commentary interprets Falstaff's last words as a vague memory of the 23rd Psalm, with its green pastures and still waters flickering in the fading consciousness. It may well be so, for

it is the religious experiences of early days that leave the most enduring impress. No one who has ever passed through such an experience in youth, no one who has ever met God and felt the powers of the world to come in early life, can forget. The scene or circumstances, the service, the preacher, the book, the Church, the comrade who communicated these expressions, remain fixed in the memory. They have a sacred and solemn significance. Even the very tune or psalm or hymn associated with such an experience acquires an endearing sacredness in all after life. We can never hear them sung without a strange tremor. It stirs memories that do often lie too deep for tears.

All this may seem a long introduction and a round-about way perhaps to the starting-point of this chapter. In a previous chapter we stood with John the Baptist. He was preaching to his young men. They had been eager searchers for the truth. He pointed them away from himself. He said, looking on another, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" Well, one of these young men who heard that never forgot the hour or the saying. It was probably the turning-point in his career. It was one of those moments that do the work of years, that

engrave lines into the life which nothing ever again obliterates. Ere that evening had passed he had taken the great decisive step that ranks a man irrevocably on the side of God. Long years afterwards he sat down to write the story of that crisis and its consequence, and we have it now in the Gospel known by his name—the Gospel of St. John. And then the years passed, and the end comes. He is a grey-haired old man. He is giving his last message to the world. It is this Book of the Revelation. A door is opened in heaven. The aged man whose bodily eye has grown dim gets a new and marvellous outlook through the eyes of the soul. Amid all the wonderful vision there is one object there, central and absorbing, one name that charms, and rules, and loosens the floodgates of adoration and of song. It is the name which seized his imagination when he was a young man. It is the name whose utterance long years before became the turning-point in his life, the name that clung to him, and grew dearer and dearer, and sweeter, and serener, and stronger as it was tested in the fiery years that followed. It is the Lamb of God. It is that name now that fills all his horizon in the last hours of his life. It is that name which is the key to the wondrous visions of this book. And

since "our finest hope is finest memory," it is that name round which gather all his faith and expectations for the future.

"Jesus, the name that charms our fears  
And bids our sorrows cease,  
'Tis music in the sinner's ear,  
'Tis life and joy and peace."

This Book of Revelation might fitly enough be called the Book of the Lamb, for the old man who wrote it is ever recurring to that name. It flows from his pen over and over again till every page of his writing glows and throbs with its music and its march. We come, then, to study the portraiture of the Lamb in the Book of the Revelation—"the Lamb opening the sealed books." It is not my purpose to enter into the debatable questions as to what these sealed books are. We shall find enough of such close to our hand without wandering off into the difficulties and dust clouds which disputants have raised around them. I shall follow mainly Dr. Robertson Nicoll's interpretation of them which he gives in his impressive little book, "The Lamb of God."

#### I. The sealed books : God.

The sealed books represent mysteries. John

weeps because no one can unravel these mysteries. Is that a far-off experience? No, it is just the experience of this present moment. Who does not feel and know how great and deep and inscrutable are the mysteries by which he is surrounded? In spite of all our advances we have only widened the circle, not dispelled the fact. Take, for instance, the greatest mystery of all, the mystery of the Power which is behind all phenomena. God is largely a sealed book. His plans, His purposes, His nature, His laws, what do we understand of these apart from Christ? Look at the countries where Christ is not known, where the revelation of God has to be gathered from man's unaided search of these. What are these countries? What is life there? What are the conditions of government, education, law, home, business, in India, in China, in Africa, in Turkey? We know what they are. Doubtless it will be said, Look at our own State; evils abound, and crime, and cruelty, and lust, and fraud. And that is all true. But picture to yourselves what we should have been without the work, word, sacrifice and service inspired by faith in Christ as the revelation of God. Subtract from our government our public life, our homes, and our education all that has come into them directly or indirectly through



the Christian faith, and what a sorry remainder you will have left! It is not difficult to see how the Lamb opens the sealed books of God. He does it mainly by revealing the heart of God. How does he do that? He does it, as we saw in our last chapter, by showing us that Fatherhood is of the essence of God, that God did not begin to love and care for His creation at a certain time in history. There never has been a moment when His nature was other than that. The idea of God solitary, alone before all time, without any relation to any other self, is unthinkable and impossible. The crux of philosophy is to explain what is this other self of God that was with Him from eternity. Great systems of thought have wrestled with this mystery. The answer of Christian philosophy is that the other self who was with God is He who has been revealed to us in time as Jesus Christ. He is the Lamb fore-ordained before the foundation of the world. There has always been in the Divine Being such a nature as Christ manifests. That is the significance of Christ's appearance. It is the assurance that while God transcends our utmost reach of thought, there has been a human element in His nature from all eternity. All that we understand by love, sacrifice, righteousness, fatherhood, belongs to God in its perfection, and

the proof and perfect manifestation of this has been made known to us in time through Him who is the incarnation of God on earth. This thought does not indeed remove all mystery from the Divine Being, but it gives Him to us in all that touches the heart and purifies the conscience, and inspires the life. The Lamb opens the sealed books of God's nature.

II. The sealed books : history and prophecy.

In the second place the Lamb opens the sealed book of history and of prophecy. Look at history. When John wrote, there lay behind him and around him a story of human life, and what was it? It was one long, hideous tragedy. It was the age of slavery, of war, of brutality, the age of the Coliseum and the amphitheatre, the age when a Roman Emperor could drive to his palace through lines of tarred and burning martyrs, and the masses salute him as God. All that is changed. It is possible now, if possible at all, only to a human fiend like "the great assassin" who cowers in lust and blood amid the harems of Constantinople. But yet, think what the world still is. As our nature has grown in refinement, it has grown in sensitiveness. The savageries that shocked us in the past do not now appear in their gross forms. But what is wanting in brutality is more than

supplied by the developed sensitiveness of human nature to suffering. And so the pain of to-day is probably a more exquisite torture to those who endure it than it could have been to those who lived long ago. And picture to yourself the extent and intensity of the pain and suffering of to-day. In presence of the wrongs and sorrows of the past, in face of the awful evils that still press upon us at this moment, what are we to make of this world at all? Cut loose from Christ and His light and leading, it becomes a hideous phantasmagoria, a mere wild, blind struggle of rats in a cage. It is enough for proof of this to refer you to the literature and the philosophy of those who attempt to find the rationale of history and of the future apart from Christ. The most powerful of our modern imaginative writers, Thomas Hardy, can find no explanation of the mystery of human life except that we are the playthings of a silent, remorseless power, which seems to take delight almost in defeating the hopes and trampling upon the tenderest sensibilities of the human heart. You remember the awful contrast he draws in one of his books. A boy hangs to the bed-post his three little brothers and sisters because he cannot bear to watch the struggle of his father and mother to keep starva-

tion from the door, and as the wretched parents lay out the stiff forms of these young victims of despair the bell of a neighbouring church peals out the chime, "Truly God is good to Israel." The awfulness of this grim irony is its truth. Looked at from one side, history is full of contrasts like that; and there is no release from them, no principle to blend them into unity save that which the life and death and resurrection of Christ supply. I say, says Robert Browning, that the acceptance of God in Christ solves for thee all questions in the earth or out of it. How it does so we may see again. But let us meanwhile take His word for it. He opens the sealed books of history. He is the justifier and the redeemer of a suffering world. He tells us that separated from Him life goes down in one red burial blent, but with Him the cross is the way to the crown.

### III. The sealed books: individual life.

Or take yet again one's own individual life. How much of it also is a sealed book! Whence have we come, whither are we going? What is this life which thinks, and throbs, and suffers, and rejoices within me? What is the meaning of suffering? What is pain? What is it in itself? What is its significance for me? And happiness,

what claim have I to it? Why should I demand it from the universe, and think a wrong is done me if it is denied? No doubt there is much in our life that we can explain. We can explain even a great deal of our suffering. We know that it is connected with sin. We know that we did wrong here and there, and these are the consequences. All that may be true. But when we have subtracted such as this from the totality of life, there is much, probably the greater part, remaining behind, quite inexplicable to us. I go into one house, for instance; I find an innocent child born a drivelling idiot, growing up to burden the home, and break the heart. I go into another, and I see a young life suffering miseries, the fruit of the sins of ancestors whom she never saw, and whose very names are unknown to her. Here on a bed a fair young girl lies burning away in the slow fire of consumption. She is lovely even in disease. She was the joy of the household, the inspiration of all who knew her, and there life ebbs out from her, while through the open windows the "birds make insolent music," and spring is crowding in with its glory and its hope and its multitudinous vitality. Everywhere around old people whose work is done are allowed to live, while the gay, the strong, the beautiful are cut down and

wither like the green herb. Everybody knows that life is full of things like this. After you deduct from it all that you can explain there remains a vast residuum, cruel, remorseless, inscrutable. In presence of such grim and widespread realities reason reels sometimes, and the heart breaks, yet brokenly lives on. What does it all mean? God's answer is, Christ. God's answer is that we see only one side of the picture, one moment of time. He shows us the Lamb on the throne. That is the power behind all. That is the one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves. And the Lamb, as we have seen, is the symbol of love, of love supreme, sacrificial, imperious, triumphant. What was Christ's own life but a constant uplifting upon the cross? Who of us can even have harder times in the world than He had? There is no possible temptation, no depth of sorrow, no blackness of infamy that can fall upon human life that He did not know—that He has not experienced. And He shows you that though in themselves these things are not good, yet they can be made to work together for good to those who are united to Him. The triumph that He won is His people's. The Christ who was stretched on the cross now sits on the throne. He sits there to give gifts to those who

will have them, to give Himself and all that He stands for to His believers. “If He is for us, who or what can be against us?” No matter how cruel or blind the trials of life, they will mean one thing, and that one thing is, as the poet sings:—

“Sometimes still,  
I come here for a little, and speak a word  
Of peace to those who wait. The slow wheel turns,  
The cycles round themselves and grow complete,  
The world’s year whitens to the harvest-tide,  
And one word only am I sent to say  
To those dear souls who wait here, or who now  
Breathe earthly air—one universal word,  
To all things living, and the word is, Love.”

## XIII

### THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE

REVELATION v. 6.

"Lo, in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb as it had been slain."

**I**N developing the thought of these studies it is impossible to avoid occasional repetition. But the truths are so profound and so necessary to our life that they may be pardoned. You will remember the story told of the writer of this book, St. John. He was asked by his disciples when he was a very old man why it was that he was so continually talking of love. "Because," said he, "that is the sum of the gospel. If you are perfect in love, there is no more to be learned." And so in these words we come once more across the thought



which so frequently asks our consideration. It is St. John's great profound way of interpreting the word "love." We are here at last also within sight of the goal, the Coronation of the Lamb. "I looked, and lo, a Lamb in the midst of the throne." That is St. John's conception of what is at the centre of the universe. That is St. John's vision of the supreme authority that rules over all things, and moves in the heart of them. He sees the throne of the universe, and in the very midmost, topmost height of it, with all created being ranged round him, a Lamb. Now, think of the wonderfulness of that thought.

The words which record it slip from our lips, and are taken as a matter of course. Yet they are really, if you come to think of it, astounding words. A recent writer has said that there are two opposite things which cause a literary work to suffer—the unpopularity or the over-popularity of its subject. It may deal with things so high as to be above the common appreciation, or with things so intimately connected with ordinary life that the phrases have become household words. The Bible belongs to the latter of these. It has suffered from its very popularity. Its words have become so familiar that to the most of readers they have lost their point of freshness. You can

have no better illustration of that than these very words of St. John. "I looked, and lo, a Lamb in the midst of the throne." They have become so familiar that they have even ceased to be incongruous in their imagery, not to say startling in the wonderfulness of their prophecy.

A Lamb in the midst of the throne. Think for a moment of the daring originality of this image. No nation of that ancient world had ever dreamed of such a thing. The Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman would have laughed at the idea. To them power certainly did not belong to the Lamb. To have said of the type of character which it symbolised, "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory," would have sounded to them humbug and nonsense. Even the race to which John himself belonged had never conceived such a thing. The Jew would have understood a lion on the throne, but the lamb for them was ever a victim, the symbol of weakness, of the vanquished, the image of the dependent soul. Its place was not the throne, but the altar. It could never be the emblem of dominion. And even after nineteen hundred years of education, the world is only yet coming within sight of John's prophecy. Did you ever look into a book of crests and monograms?

For myself, I have considerable sympathy with Sidney Smith's reply. A man came to him one day to tell him that he was compiling a history of the great families in that part of the country, and he would like to have his history and his crest. The witty clergyman replied that the Smiths never had any crests, and they invariably sealed their letters with their thumbs. But the point I want to make is this. If you look at a book of crests you will be astonished at the number that are warlike: naked arms with naked swords, hands clenching daggers, and mottoes that suggest certainly not the lamblike disposition. Or look at the flags of a country. I have said that in John's day no empire would have ever dreamed of painting a lamb on its national banners. Even in these modern times so-called Christian nations take as their emblems the wildest and most savage of beasts. Russia marches to the bear, or at least is known as the Great Bear. Germany chooses the eagle, Britain the lion, and John Bull masquerades everywhere as a type of our race. Only the other day we had the most wonderful national celebration ever seen in the world. Millions assembled in London to do homage to the great Empress whose life has lent lustre to the British throne. Well, in that procession what

had the place of honour? The lamb? No. The lion, the emblems of war and slaughter, the soldier, the marines, the man and machinery of destruction. These filled up mile upon mile of the march. Everything else was nowhere. Yet one day that will all be altered. "For I looked, and lo, a Lamb in the midst of the throne." You think probably that is Utopian and absurd. It all depends upon where you stand. Stand in the low grounds, the moral swamps of life whose mists and miasma darken the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and you can see nothing but the massiveness and strength of evil, and you will think John's vision absurd. Stand with the Lord God Almighty on the summits of eternity, and Christ fills all the future, and you hear the swell of the coronation song rising like the voice of a great thunder, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." True it is that the world seems far off from the time when the Lamb shall sit on the throne of its thought and work and life. Yet, as you cast your eye backward along the course that it has travelled, you have less doubt of the goal to which it is marching. One cannot speak on this point without acknowledging the great lucid contribution which

Professor Drummond has made to the subject in his book, "The Ascent of Man." Drummond shows impressively there how the whole movement of life forward from its tiniest speck has been a movement dictated by love. Science has made us familiar with the struggle of life. We know how universal, how all-pervasive is that struggle. But that is only a half truth. Other life also struggles to reproduce itself. In the unconscious vegetable world life surrenders itself for another life. It produces seed and dies in the act. Take the tiniest of protoplasmic cells. Put it in a suitable medium, and presently it will perform two great acts, the two which constitute the difference between nutrition and reproduction. At one moment under the stress of struggle for life it will call in matter from without and assimilate it to itself. At another in pursuance of the struggle for other life, it will set a portion of that matter apart, add to it, and finally give it away to form another life. Even at the very dawn of existence life thus recognises self and other self. Look at the bursting forth of nature these spring days. What does it mean? Search among the withered petals, and there in a cradle of cunning workmanship is a hidden prodigy of clustering seeds. They are gifts to the future which the dying mothers of

last summer brought forth and left in the world. They left them there at the cost of their own life. The food they might have lived upon is gone to their children. It is stored around each living embryo with wisest care, so that when they waken into the world their first helplessness and their hunger are met. All the arrangements in plant life which concern the flower, fruit, and the seed are the creation of the struggle for the life of others. They are the first rough drafts of the love that sits on the throne of the universe. Pass from the vegetable to the animal world, and here again the whole evolution has this goal of love in view. The ascent of life as it becomes housed in a human body was made according to this supreme law—life laying down itself for another life. When the human body is reached the development stops. Man's body has not advanced a stage beyond what it reached millenniums ago. It stopped when tools were discovered. Why? Because henceforward it was mind that was to take command of love. Then mind began its development; but concurrently with it the other development still went on. The struggle for the life of others grew keener and became more intelligent and refined. The first rough drafts of motherhood became more distinct. Through a long slow process, through

ages and ages, the development went on. At last the human mother appeared upon the scene. With her new words came into existence. The greatest of these is home. Into the home comes the little child, and love at last attains its deepest significance. The human offspring are the most helpless of all. They are dependent for years on the parent, and so new elements are wrought into the conception of love: patience, tenderness, pity, kindness. These are added, and it grows richer and richer. Moreover, new emphasis is put upon its necessity. The offspring well cared for is the strongest and most enduring. Hence as the family grows into the clan, and the clan becomes a tribe, and the tribe a nation, even self-preservation calls aloud for love. The community in which love is best developed has within it the promise and potency of strength and endurance. The community which puts little emphasis upon it, which allows the institutions that nourish it, the home, motherhood, fatherhood, parental relations, to go into decay, shrivel up and disappear from history. Bad parents mean starved children, and starved children will be replaced in the struggle for life by full-bred and well-cared for ones, and in a few generations parents without love are left behind and lost in the race of life. Thus the

whole age-long process from the tiniest germ of life up to its crown in man has developed in obedience to this supreme law, care for others, and when this reaches its maximum there you have the strongest manhood, and the most enduring and progressive nation. Now, if you follow this evolution out into the fields of history and of social development you will see it heading for the same goal. Take only one of these. Take, for instance, war. War represents organised violence on the worst and wildest scale. It is a confession of complete breakdown of all that makes us men. It is the recrudescence of barbarism, the uprising of the beast in humanity. Well now, look how far we have travelled. War began in mere wanton excitement and cruelty. At first it was pastime. Men hunted men as now they hunt hares or wolves, or as a man hunts his fellow at this hour in the jungles of Africa. Coarse and brutal excitement were the reasons for war at first ; and for ages, extermination. But it was obliged to move on and up. Then bloody of hand and of face, it became a war for slavery. Captives were not killed. They were saved for the sake of work. Little by little it became a war for power, dominion. Then war for wealth, for commerce. By and by a war for liberty, for ideas, for great



principles, and now the public sentiment of a civilised nation has come on the whole to outlaw the nation that goes to war to aggrandise itself, to grab territory, or oppress a weak people. Thus has it been with power organised in the interests of violence and bloodshed. The Lamb is not yet enthroned there, but he is gradually moving up to recognition and authority. So is it in twenty other spheres of the social life. Everywhere slowly but surely society is organising itself according to this supreme law of love. Everywhere the nation and the kingdom whose citizens care most for their fellows draw to the front. Everywhere the nation and the kingdom that does not is left behind, gross, stagnant, and vanishes in corruption. "In the profoundest sense," writes Professor Drummond, at the close of his great book, "this is scientific doctrine. The Ascent of Man and of Society is bound up henceforth with the conflict, the intensification, and the diffusion of the Struggle for the love of others. This is the Further Evolution, the page of history that lies before us, the closing act of the drama of Man. The Struggle may be short or long, but by all scientific analogy the result is sure. All the other Kingdoms of Nature were completed; Evolution always attains; always rounds off its work. It

spent an eternity over the earth, but finished it. It struggled for millenniums to bring the Vegetable Kingdom up to the Flowering Plants, and attained. In the Animal Kingdom it never paused until the possibilities of organisation were exhausted in the Mammalia. Kindled by this past, Man may surely say, 'I shall arrive.' The succession cannot break."

He who hath begun the good work will not let it drop from his hands; as the seer of Patmos saw generations ago, so shall our eyes one day see. "I looked, and lo, a Lamb in the midst of the throne."

But the great closing question is, What shall be the effect of that vision? There are those who burst into song as it dawns upon them, and there are those who shrink from its sight as the bats and beetles shrink from the sun, who call on the hills and the mountains to hide them from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne. How that supreme revelation of love, crowned and conquering, will affect us depends on how we are preparing for it now. There is but one thing left us, to know the love of Christ, to go into sympathy with the Lamb in the midst of the throne. All things are making for that. All life is being drawn on towards that. All that will not sink into

extinction. How is it with us? That is the one question of this earthly life. That is the one reason for which it is given and continued. "Life with all it yields of joy and sorrow is but our chance of the prize of learning love." He that is not learning this is missing the whole use of earth. He is setting himself at right angles to the supreme law that rules the world. So then we know which way the issues tend. Let us fall into line with the forces that are making for the coronation of the Lamb. We dare not oppose them, for that way lie misery and death. We can do something to aid them. The lion has got to eat straw: let us prepare it for him. The bear has got to walk out with the cow and not hurt her, and the little child is to be safe and secure playing in his innocence about the den of the cockatrice. The course, the hard, the cruel have to go under, and the bright, the sweet, the pure, the loving have got to come to the top. Let us begin that work in our own hearts and our own homes. There let love be Lord of all. Let us administer correction, censure, criticism, guidance. Let us crown the Lamb on the throne of our hearts, our thought and work, and let us try to do it in the thought and work of others. So shall our lives fall into rhythm,

for they shall become one with the law of the universe. So shall they cease to jar the harmony which God is seeking to restore to a disordered world.

## XIV

### THE CORONATION SONG

REVELATION v. 9.

“They sing a new song” (R.V.).

I WAS reading an interesting article in the *Spectator*. It was entitled, “The Power of the Undefined.” It was suggested by the recent Jubilee celebrations. An immense multitude of people of every kindred, tribe, and tongue united to do homage to the Queen. What led them to do this? You could scarcely tell. You could not put it into document, or legal phrases, or Acts of Parliament. It lay deeper than any of these. It was the personality, the character, the spirit of a woman that called it forth. But that is about all you can say ; for when you come to try to express it in propositions and formulæ,

you feel that they fail you. The other great watchword of the celebrations was the Empire. Next to the Queen the unity of the Empire was thrown into relief. All round the world that idea has taken hold of the diverse peoples that owned the relationship of Queen Victoria. But who can define that unity? Who can express in exact terms what it signifies? No one. It may be that we are on the way to a closer and more exact statement on the political and commercial relations between Britain and her colonies. But the ablest men of all parties realise that our strongest tie is one that lies outside treaties, that natural growth is more to be trusted than cut-and-dried arrangements, and that hastily constructed formulæ of this kind are vastly more dangerous than no formulæ at all. In a word, the Empire, like our late Queen, represents the power of the undefined. Well, the same principle runs through every sphere of life. It holds in religion also. We cannot do without creeds and definitions. Nevertheless, the life of religion is not in these. They are its body, not its soul. Christ Himself made large use of the undefinable. Who can put into exact words what is meant by life, spirit? "I in them, and thou in Me." "Eat My flesh and drink My blood," &c. ? One day a poor ignorant woman came to Him

from a Samaritan village. He began to talk to her, and he went on and up till He reached the highest and the profoundest things. He spoke in a strange, mystical way about "Spirit" and "living water," about things which even we have not yet sounded the full significance of, and are unable to put into exact definition. Thus, He started thought, imagination, curiosity, wonder, inquiry, and so religion reaches its highest flights, receives its deepest interpretation from words and music and song whose meaning we know and feel. But if we were asked to define them exactly we could not possibly do it. Well, it is in this attitude that we may approach our subject. That subject is what I have called "The Coronation Song." This song here, however, let me again remind you, is only one of five in this book which are directly or indirectly connected with the theme. We may not be able to put into precise words all that it means. We are sure we shall not. We are sure that it soars to heights where no wing of ours can follow, but it may do us good just to try to listen to it, and though we cannot set it out in exact words, it may have for us the inspiration of the undefinable. "They sing as it were a new song." We shall think of two things—the singers and the song—and mainly of the former.

## I. The singers.

They sing. Who are they? If you look back and read the whole of these two chapters you will see that those who swelled the chorus of the new song are divisible into three great companies—three types of life. There is, first, nature animate and inanimate. Then there is redeemed manhood, and then there are the angelic hosts, and these united together to swell the new song. First, there is nature animate and inanimate. This is involved in the symbolism of the four living creatures. The living creatures are evidently taken from Ezekiel's vision, and in Ezekiel's vision they had four faces: the face of a lion, the face of an ox, the face of an eagle, and over all, the face of a man—a lion, the king of wild beasts; an ox, the king of tame; an eagle, the king of the winged creation; and a man, the supreme ruler of all. And so what this group signifies is the harmony of nature, the restoration of that primitive glory when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. The coronation of the Lamb carries with it the redemption of nature. The sin of man has infected nature and dragged it down into darkness and oppression. To the pagan nature is terrible—a dumb, inexplicable tyrant. Jove hurls his bolts, Neptune lashes the sea, and the very trees



and mountains have their satyrs and evil-deeming deities. It is only when you come to look at these from the eyes of Christ that you understand their meaning. And what is that meaning? It is God everywhere. What is the meaning of these spring days but the life of God pouring itself forth through a million channels, painting itself in the beauty of flowers, singing itself in the songs of birds, giving itself for use and food in the grass and corn of the hillsides? What are these forces of nature but the muscles and arms of God dredging for us, driving the water, wheeling the winds, scattering the rains, so that we might live and enjoy? And this great, dumb, groaning, inexplicable nature shall burst forth into singing some day. "It shall be delivered," as St. Paul says, "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." Goethe says, "I have had the sensation as if Nature, in wailing sadness, entreated something of me, so that not to understand what she longed for, cut me to the heart." But St. John understands what she longs for, and St. Paul. She stretches out eager, dumb, expectant hands for the manifestation of the sons of God. And that is the realisation which St. John gives us here in this wonderful vision. Long ago, when I was a boy, there was a passage in

Cowper's great poem, "The Task," which used to charm me. Few read Cowper now, I fear, yet he is very well worth reading. He is a genuine poet, a poet with a true, tender, spiritual insight, though perhaps not always inspired. I turn to him to let him tell you what this redemption and rejoicing of Nature means; for it is only a poet who is competent to do that :—

"And rivers of gladness water all the earth  
And clothe all climes with beauty; the reproach  
Of barrenness is past. The fruitful field  
Laughs with abundance; and the land once lean,  
Or fertile only in its own disgrace,  
Exults to see its thistly curse repeal'd,  
The various seasons woven into one,  
And that one season an eternal spring.  
The garden fears no blight, and needs no fence,  
For there is none to covet, all are full.  
The lion and the libbard and the bear  
Graze with the fearless flocks. All bask at noon  
Together, or all gambol in the shade  
Of the same grove, and drink one common stream.  
Antipathies are none. No foe to man  
Lurks in the serpent now; the mother sees  
And smiles to see her infant's playful hand  
Stretch'd forth to dally with the crested worm,  
To stroke his azure neck, or to receive  
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.  
All creatures worship man, and all mankind  
One Lord, one Father. Error has no place;  
That creeping pestilence is driven away,  
The breath of heaven has chased it. In the heart

No passion touches a discordant string,  
But all is harmony and love. Disease  
Is not. The pure and uncontaminate blood  
Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.  
One song employs all nations, and all cry,  
'Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us!'  
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks shout to  
each other; and the mountain-tops  
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,  
Till nation after nation taught the strain,  
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round.  
Behold the measure of a promise fill'd,  
See Salem built, the labour of a God.  
Bright as a sun the sacred city shines;  
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth  
Flock to that light; the glory of all lands  
Flows into her, unbounded is her joy,  
And endless her increase."

The second group of singers here are the four-and-twenty elders. These, let us say, stand for the Church of the redeemed. They are typical of those who have been ransomed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. It is significant, however, that they are represented not as praising Him for their own redemption, but for the redemption of others. They thus manifest the true spirit of love, the spirit which can sing and praise for the gifts and graces bestowed on others.

The third group of singers are the angels. These stand on the outer ranks. They are round

about the elders and the living creatures. Why? Because they are only saviours, not the saved. Those who are closest to the Lamb are those for whom He suffered most. That is nature. Love clings closest to that which claims it most constantly. The misformed child, the weak, the sickly, are dearest to the mother just because they need her most. And so the angels never sinned, and therefore never can feel the thrill and throb of the song of the saved. There is a picture in one of the art galleries in Italy by one of the old masters that I remember seeing once. An angel stands at the empty tomb. He holds in his hands the thorny crown with the bloodstains adrip on its sharp points. He is fingering these with a look of wonder and amazement. It is all inexplicable to him. He cannot fathom the scene of which that is the last ripe crimson fruitage. "Which things the angels desire to look into." They are interested as civilians are interested in the veterans who have come back from the war. They join in the victor's song, but the song of the redeemed has a note in it that the angels cannot sound. That is perhaps the reason why the angels are not represented as singing at all. They are only represented as crying with a loud voice. But perhaps this very speech has music in it. Yet it

is significant that, as far as I am aware, it is only the redeemed who, in the vision of this book, are represented as singing. It is only they who have been purchased by blood who sound the most musical notes in the great chorus that swells out like the voice of a mighty thunder, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"

## II. The song.

Now, we pass from the singers to the song. What is it opens the floodgates of music? What is it binds earth to heaven? What is it joins in one harmonious unity the animate and inanimate creation—earth with her illimitable powers, the morning stars, the sons of God, the angels and archangels and the eternal world? It is love. It is the love of God in Christ. Need we wonder at that? St. Paul says it is the greatest thing in the universe. St. John, instead of saying that in words, sets it in music, gives us here a picture of its harmonising, uniting power. And can we not believe it? Do we not see it in a small way before our own eyes? What is it blends the discords and sets the heart to music? It is love. What is it makes the charm of home, sweet home? What is it creates the dearness in a mother's name? What is it unites families in the grace of peace and chivalry? It is love. It is the life

there that forgets itself, that thinks of others, that suffers, and, if need be, dies for them. It is that which sanctifies the household. It is that which lends its halo to the mother's memory when it shines upon us out of the undying past. Thus, at the beginning of all our lives, we have an object-lesson of the harmonising power of love, and if that could be kept cleansed, uplifted, made passionate and pure in households and in nations, the world would be transformed. Well, St. John says that it is to be so one day. St. John says all who have not learned to love, all that cannot be taught to love, shall be cast out, shall go down in the bottomless pit, and love, whose centre and culmination is the Lamb that was slain—love shall be Lord of all.

Now, this dictates two closing lessons. The first is this: Shall I be of those who join in this new song? How shall I know? The test is very simple. It is just this: Can you do it now? In other words, does the Lamb that was slain set you singing? Does it stir emotion in your heart at this moment? Observe what I am asking. I am not asking, Do you admire Christ? I am not asking, Are you honest and prayerful? I am not asking, Do you read your Bible and attend Church, and take the communion? You may do all these

things and yet have neither part nor lot with those who shall lift the new song of the redeemed. No, the test is this: Is your service of Christ a joy? Does the thought of His love for you put music into your life now? Do you realise that "He loved me and gave Himself for me"? And as the outcome of that, do you find your delight in serving Him? Are you seeking that it should be so? If not, how in the world can you expect to join the company of those who have only this passion and no other ambition? Take an untrained savage, ignorant of music or of the sentiments that sets music astir in a high-class concert. What would it be to him? A babble of sounds, a discord, and, if prolonged, almost a very hell. And if we are not atuning our lives to the love which makes heaven even on earth and binds the universe in harmony, then there is nothing before us but the outer darkness.

There is one other thing. When John opens the door of heaven and lets us hear the mighty swell of the victors' song, it closes again, and then in the following chapters he portrays the life battle, the fierce fights, the dragons, and blood, and conflict. He opens the seals that precede this harmonised consummation, and earth reels beneath the Armageddon conflict. Ah, but those who have

once heard the music of the new song, and seen the consummation of it all, need fear no more. We turn into our work again. The years lie before us—long years, it may be, of stern conflict, or only commonplace drudgery. But no matter. For us the main thing is that we are to win or lose our souls, that we are to grow ripe and ready for the crowning day, or ripe and ready for the avenging judgment. It is this which gives significance and solemnity even to the drudgeries of life. They challenge us for our souls and for our eternity. Well, then, it will be good for us to have looked on to the end, to have seen the supreme consummation to which all things are moving. Those who have watched the sun rise once, and known his sweetness and strength in their lives, can bear the night hours in memory and hope. We may not have been able to define exactly the significance of the new song and its singers, but what then? We may not be able to analyse the splendours of the dawn as it breaks in glory over the snowy peaks. We may not be able to dissect the sunset glammers on the hillside. No, but we come down from those solemn visions gladdened, refreshed, inspired for the dull, hot, dusty life in the valleys below. And so, having heard the dim, sweet echoes of the new song, and seen for a moment “the one



far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves," we may go back to our daily tasks with a memory and a hope. If we are on the side of the Lamb, we may fail at points, but no final overthrow is possible for us. We are moving to victory, and all those things, whether joy or sorrow, life or death, are working for our good.

## XV

### ECHOES OF THE CORONATION SONG

#### REVELATION V. 12.

“Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain, to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

I THINK one might preach a score of sermons on this subject, and at the end of that time would discover that another score would not exhaust the subject. But I am obliged to compress what I would like to say about the new song into this one chapter. I spoke in the last chapter about the singers and the song. St. John says that he saw the singers cast down their crowns before the throne. And who was on the throne? He says it was the throne of God and of the Lamb, and the throne of God and the Lamb is God manifested in Christ; that is, God in His

aspect of redeeming, sacrificial love. He says that when men come to themselves, before that all crowns will go down. Now, what are the crowns that are thus cast down before this enthroned love? We shall get that in the verse which I have prefixed to this chapter—"Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Here are the crowns that are cast down before the throne. Here, to vary the metaphor, are some echoes, or perhaps it would be better to say some notes, of the coronation song. They cast down their crowns before Him—the crowns of power, riches, wisdom, might, honour, glory, blessing. Let us look for a minute at each of these crowns thus cast down before the Lamb.

#### I. The crowns cast down : Power.

There is no crown man aspires after so much. The crown of power is the most desired of all man's crowns. Power—man is on the search for it everywhere. He believes with Milton's satire, that to be weak is to be miserable. Ay, it seems sometimes as if he almost believed that it is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven. But power must be related to character. "Thou art worthy to receive power." Thou. Who? The Lamb

who was slain. You see the point. The source of power is love. It is love only that has the right to rule. Power, unrelated to love, moving from any other centre is a usurpation, a curse to its possessor, and to the race. A father's authority over a child depends on his love of the child. Without that he has no right to rule. Unless he loves he ought not to have the power. His power otherwise will work evil, not good. So it is everywhere. Power is won by love. No power that is not won thus lasts. The stars in their courses are fighting against it. Look at history. When John wrote empires lay behind him in the dust. Why were they in the dust? Because their power had not its origin in love. They were not administered in the interests of love. They were founded on force. They were cemented by fear. There they rise, fierce, masterful, tyrannical—Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome. There they go, one after the other, toppling into ruins as icebergs that swim into summer seas. And so it has been ever since. Whoever claims power on any other ground than that of love, it will not last. It is doomed. Do you not see how development is moving along these lines? When John wrote the people were the servants of the king. See how far we have travelled from that. We have

almost reversed it. To-day kings must be the servants of the people. If they are not their thrones are not worth a year's purchase. All this marshals us the way that we are going. "Thou art worthy to receive power." Power belongs only to love. Love is to be crowned as the one source of power, the one thing that has a right and title to use it. "Thou art worthy to receive power." Why? Because thou hast carried love to its uttermost limit. It went down to the lowest, therefore it is exalted to the highest. "They cast down their crowns before Him." They cast down their crown of power.

## II. Riches.

But there is a second crown—wealth, riches. "Thou art worthy to receive riches." The common idea is that everybody has a right to get money, and everybody is head-foremost in the wild scramble for it. John says No. John says there is but one sort of character that has a right to money, and one sort of character that in the long run will be allowed to keep it. It is the person who loves. It is the Lamblike character. "Thou art worthy to receive riches." What is the meaning of this mad wrestle for riches? What is the secret and significance of this fierce fight for gold? It is caused by crowds of

people setting themselves in opposition to the great law of the universe. That law is that nobody is worthy to have money save those who love. And the loveless multitudes are marching at right angles to that law, and so they are stricken through with many darts ; and therefore this contest is made so fierce ; it is made so fierce because the stars in their courses are leagued with God Almighty's law—His law which has been knit into the nature of things ; His law which has ordained this : "Thou art worthy to receive riches." But how all forces rightly understood are seen to be heading for that goal ! Who is it have wealth ? Who is it are really rich ? It is only those who love. It is only those who hold wealth as a trust, and administer it in the interests of love. They who do not sooner or later lose their wealth. They join the great stream of things moving to oblivion, or if they keep it, it curses them. Nothing is more impressive than the operation of this law in history. You see it working itself out even before your very eyes every day. Look ! here is a man who sits like a great spider, gathering in to himself all the lines of wealth and giving out none. He adds house to house and estate to estate. You drive for miles through his farms and his sheep

runs. You say to yourself, "Well, well, how this man has got on; what a fortune he has accumulated; how well-to-do his children will be!" And then many years go by, and one day you happen to be driving that way again, and you say to your driver, "This is So-and-So's estate, is it not?" and the driver says, "Oh yes, it used to be, but it changed hands long ago. The old man, who grew so niggardly that he would have wrestled a ghost in a two-foot hall for a halfpenny, died. Poor old fellow! He had not much comfort with all his wealth! Many envied him. Nobody cared for him. And when he went his children could not keep the place. It was enough to make him turn in his grave to see the way they squandered the money that he had so painfully accumulated. One went astray, another was silly, and the whole thing slipped through their fingers. It has been cut up and sold, and is all in other hands now." That is how the neighbours and the newspapers and the gossips explain it. And what is the real explanation of it? It is this: It is the supreme law going into operation. "Worthy art thou to receive riches." Riches belong only to love. It is only love that is allowed to keep and administer them. When a man does not love then they are taken from him. His accumulations, no matter

how vast, are distributed back again into the community from which he usurped them. Let us make no mistake. It is an old saying, but it is as true as ever—"I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." "Thou art worthy to receive riches." I know, of course, what you would like to say if you had the chance to speak. You would like to say that it does not always turn out that way. One does not always see this law vindicated in life. No, perhaps not always. God does not pay His accounts every Saturday night. With Him a thousand years are but as one day; but He pays some time. And even though we should not see it literally fulfilled, it may be fulfilled in another way. We read about certain men that "He gave them their desires, and sent leanness into their souls." Sometimes the loveless man grows rich, and is allowed to keep his riches, and what then? When am I really rich? Only when I can rightly use the things which I have, only when my riches minister to life. The dyspeptic is not rich for the luxuries on his table if he cannot digest them. They irritate and curse



him. The ignorant man is not rich in his library if he cannot enjoy them. The man who has destroyed his artistic sensibility by devotion to business has no real ownership in the pictures that hang on his wall if they tell no story and stir no emotions. We possess only what we know how to use, and love is the only key that will open that door. It is love serving and love sacrificing that alone is worthy to be rich, and that alone is truly rich. There will be no peace in this world and no progress in this country or in any other till that principle is recognised, till riches pass into the hands of the men and women who are Christlike, the men and women who cast down their crowns of wealth before His throne. All the trouble of the world has come out of the struggle to dodge that law ; but it will not be dodged. History is strewn with the wrecks of men and empires that have tried it. God Almighty will overturn, overturn, overturn, till men come to respect it, till people and nations understand that no one is worthy of wealth who does not love, till men and women learn the accents of the great new song, "Thou art worthy to receive riches." The real question is, not how to get wealth, but who you are who are trying to get it. Make very sure of this, that there is only one sort of character

who will be allowed to hold riches in this or in any other world, and that is the character who has enthroned love as Lord of life, who has learned to cast down the crown before the throne of Christ, saying, "Thou art worthy to receive riches."

### III. Wisdom.

And wisdom, there is a third crown. "Thou art worthy to receive wisdom." The shortest definition of a devil might be wisdom without love. It is love only that is worthy to receive wisdom. Nay more, it is love only that is wise. It is well to remember that. It is well to emphasise it. We live in times when the schoolmaster is abroad, colleges abound, university graduates are getting thick as the leaves of "Vallombrosa," newspapers carry knowledge into all homes, every man has a book in his hand. Yes, it is a wise time, and we are a learned people, very. But are we really? Before you could answer that there is a prior question. Are we learning to love? For wisdom without love is only another name for a fiend. The cynic and the loveless are fools. There is nobody so short-sighted as the loveless man. He may have all the learning of all philosophies, but if he does not move obedient to love it is worth just nothing at all. Love, after all, is the true wisdom, for it is love sees into life, understands God and man, and

enjoys both. Look at the world that unfolds itself before the eyes of a Shakespeare, or a Barrie, or a Maclaren. What is the secret of the insight of these men? It is their sympathy, their power to put themselves in the place of others. Love makes them wise. Look at Jesus. He walks through the earth. He discovers laws; He reveals the potencies of life. He turns its waste into gold. He teaches us the value of a Magdalene and of a Zacchæus. He lifts up those that we had cast down, and casts down those that we had lifted up. When He did that eighteen hundred years ago they crucified Him. Now we crown Him. What was the secret of this marvelous wisdom? It all lay in one word—love. It was by loving man that He got to know man. It was by loving Martha, and Peter, and Mary, and the thief that He gained insight into their souls, that He solved the problem with which men have wrestled in vain, that He revealed the laws by which the world has marched forward ever since “Thou art worthy to receive wisdom.”

“Blind souls, who say that Love is blind,  
He only sees aright;  
His only are the eyes that find  
The spirit's central light.

“He lifts—while others grope and pry—  
His gaze serene and far;  
And they but see a waste of sky  
Where Love can see the Star.”

Yes, love is wise, and to seek other wisdom without loving is to blind ourselves to all real knowledge, and write ourselves down as fools in the book of eternal life.

III. “And glory and honour and blessing.”

There are three more crowns, but I cannot dwell on each in detail. To the Lamb, to love belongs glory, and honour, and blessing. We are coming to be within sight of that too. Once man thought honour and glory belonged to strength, to power, to the soldier. Now we are getting to know that they belong only to love.

“While valour’s haughty minions wait  
Till all their scars are shown,  
Love walks unchallenged through the gate,  
And sits beside the throne.”

But I must pass from this. There is one word I want to say as I close. It is this. You see now the reason why the New Testament puts so much emphasis on faith in Christ, on love to Christ. It is no mere intellectual acquirement. A man is not condemned because his judgment does not assent

to this or that doctrine or opinion about Christ. His condemnation is this, that he does not love Christ. Why? Why does that carry with it moral and spiritual reprobation? For this reason: Christ is the presentation of love in its perfection. To turn away from Him, therefore, is to turn away from Love. To refuse to enthrone Him at the centre of our song, of our adoration, of our life, is to proclaim the hardness of the heart that will not open to Him who died for it. It is to deny the lordship of love, and to deny the lordship of love is to proclaim ourselves useless to God and blind to the eternal laws of His universe. It is to set ourselves in antagonism to those Divine forces that, swift or slow, are moving, all destined for eternal life, up to swell that new eternal song, "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and honour, and glory, and blessing." How simple that makes life! How simple it makes religion! Progress in the moral world is from complexity to simplicity. First one hundred and one duties; then Moses gathers them up into ten commandments; then the Pharisees and the scribes multiply them into hundreds more; then Jesus comes, and sweeps them all away. "This is My commandment," He says, "that ye love one another, as I have

loved you." And then John sees the final issue of love, sees its dominion and place in the coming kingdom. It is Lord of all. "They cast down their crowns before Him." And the harmony of the universe is found when the slain Lamb, when redeeming love is acknowledged King of kings and Lord of lords. Let us take care we do not miss the direction in which the great forces of the world are moving. We are all in the search for power, and riches, and wisdom, and glory, and honour, and blessing. There is just one road to these. It is the road consecrated by the feet of Christ. It is the way shown to us in this great vision here—"They cast down their crowns before Him." To reverence love, to culture love, to learn to yield to it, to make it master of our life and work, that is the ultimate end of Christ's coming. That is the one way to put ourselves in unison with the eternal laws of the universe. That is the one thing which stays with us in life, and ranks us high or low in the kingdom that is coming. And so there we come to an end. We end where we started.

"What is the beginning? Love. What is the course?  
Love still.

What the goal? The goal is love on the happy hill.

ECHOES OF THE CORONATION SONG 203

"Is there nothing then but love, search we sky or  
earth?

There is nothing out of love hath perpetual worth.

"All things flag but only love, all things fail or flee,  
There is nothing left but love, worthy thee or me."

## XVI

### THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION

REVELATION XIV. 1, 2.

HERE is another stage in the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb. The first question is, What and where is Mount Zion? We know what it was historically. In its origin the word means, snowy, or high, a mountain. It was the name given to one of the spurs of the hills on which Jerusalem stood. Then it was taken by David, and became the City of David, and Jerusalem in general. In poetry, in the Book of Psalms, it is used as synonymous of God's chosen people. In the New Testament it stands for the Church—the Church militant and the Church triumphant. This is its last meaning. Now, John in his vision here looks, and lo, a Lamb stands



there. He is in the centre of Zion, that is, in the Church. He. Who? The Lamb. We know by this time who the Lamb is, and what He stands for. The Lamb is God, God in Christ. He is the presentation to us of that side of the Divine character that nature failed to make clear. He is the revelation of God in His gentleness, His holiness, and above all in His redeeming, sacrificial, Fatherly love. John looks and he sees the Lamb in the centre of Mount Zion. He is the supreme, the commanding figure there. Everything else is grouped about him. Everything else takes order and form from Him, the centre figure. Now, let us notice what follows from this. John says, "I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps." What is the significance of this? It means that when the Lamb Christ as the redeeming sacrificial love of God is accepted, and exalted, and made central in the Church and the life, there follow harmony, unity, order. It may mean more than that, but that will be sufficient for us to emphasise here. John represents heaven under the symbolism of music. As I have said before, some people sneer at the idea of heaven as a place of harps

and organs and eternal psalm-singing. As Arthur Hugh Clough says:—

“ Oh, it is past belief that Christ hath died,  
 Only that we unending psalms might sing,  
 That all the gain death's awful curtains hide,  
 Is an eternity of antheming.”

Yet I must say the sneer is a cheap one. It reveals nothing but the shallowness of those who make it. For what is music? Music is the highest form of harmony. It is the one great art in which obedience to law comes nearest to perfection. Moreover, it is an art which more than another gives expression to the emotions, the feelings. Joy or sorrow, passion or peace, all tend to run into song. All great feelings blossom into music. More than any other art, more than oratory, or painting, or sculpture, music gives outlet for the deeper emotions of life. Now, John in this Book is trying to put into words the idea of the redeemed life. He has to do it in forms and symbols intelligible to us. He might have said in plain prose that it is a life of law and order, that it is an awful and a blessed life; but how thin and meagre are these words compared with the symbolism which he does use! He says

it is a life of song and of music. That includes everything; for song and music are not like law and order, constantly changing. They mean the same thing in every age, and among all peoples. When John therefore presents to us the redeemed existence under the symbol of a singing existence, he wishes to bring home to us its harmoniousness, its fulfilment, its completeness, its gladness, and so he pictures for us the summing-up of the universe under the symbol of music and song. "I heard as it were the voice of many waters, and the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and they sung as it were a new song."

Now, notice next when this takes place. "I looked and lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion." That is, it is when Christ is in the centre of the life, it is when Christ stands on the highest summit of existence. And mark, it is not Christ as the man, not Christ as the model of life. It is Christ dying. It is Christ as the Lamb, the sacrificial victim. It is Christ laying down His life for the life of humanity. It is Christ in this capacity throned in the life that makes life harmonious and musical. You see the preludes of this everywhere about. What is it gives unity to life anywhere? It is love. Love is

the master-passion of existence. Tell me what is in the lion's heart, and I will rule it? Get hold of the affections, and man is in your power. Life follows love as the tides follow the moon. But love must be centred on its true objects. Otherwise it only curses life. What is its true object? Not one's self. Self-love is ruinous. It disrupts the life. It jars its music. It breaks its harmony. In literal truth that is so. Great singers must be sympathetic or they can never retain their greatness. Hence also, as a great writer has said, "No one who is centrally selfish can become a first-rate composer or performer, and often when everything else is perfect, this defect spoils all." We have all heard singers who had voice, and culture, and technique and everything, but the whole execution was marred by this. They were self-conscious. They never let themselves go. They did not lose their soul in their song. "If I could make you suffer for two years," said a teacher to a noted singer, "you would be the best contralto in the world." Hence it follows by inevitable logic—and let those who sing in choirs take note of this—that no one can truly sing God's praises who does not adore God, who is not emancipated from self. No training of voice or touch can compass the Divine secret of praise. It is

said that the undevout astronomer is mad, but the undevout musician is an impertinence, is even an impossibility. He is a contradiction in terms. But I am getting away from the point. The point I wanted to make is this: Life follows love, and we are all lovers; but life can only grow harmonious when its love sets itself on true subjects; and the supreme object of love can never be self. It must be some one outside self. Now, you know how love for another when it is deep and genuine becomes a regenerating influence of life. You know how it makes it beautiful in thoughtfulness. You know how it calls off the currents of selfishness, and turns them into new channels of self-denying service for others. You know how it has power often to transform the feeble and the fastidious lover, the coward, and even the lustful, and the vicious into earnest, serious, lovely lives. Well now, what is wanted is that this love which is capable of such achievement on lower planes should carry its force up to the highest. And at the top of all stands Christ—Christ the Lamb of God; and what John says is this: That when men and women set Him on the throne of their hearts, in the summits of their lives, then life gets unity, and music, and rhythm, and order, and harmony, and completeness. They can wring music even out of

the very jangles and broken cords of existence. "Not long ago," says Dr. Hugh Macmillan, "a great scientific man made a curious experiment. He wanted to test the effect of sound on soft, yielding substances. He got an exceedingly delicate parchment. He stretched it upon four points on each corner above a table. On the elastic membranes he spread a very thin layer of soft, fluid paste. He then got a celebrated lady musician to sing over it a popular song. As the waves of air caused by the tones of her voice struck the apparatus, the soft paste began to move as if alive. It began to arrange itself into most beautiful forms of vegetable life, baskets of fruit, and even miniature landscapes. The tones of music heard by the ear were transformed into flowers seen by the eye—a daisy, a fern, a violet, a lily," &c. It is a very wonderful experiment. It was a marvellous sight thus to see the player make visible the loveliest shapes and forms in answer to the call of this music. Wordsworth in an exquisite line says of a rustic maiden, "That beauty born of murmuring sound shall pass into her face." This scientific experiment is another illustration of how the poet is the prophet, the seer, the fore-teller, for it appears that Wordsworth's statement turns out to be a simple scientific fact.

Well, Christ as the slain Lamb is the master musician of life. When he plays over receptive souls the music of His Cross and Passion, the glory and the sweetness of His redeeming love, then they too are transformed. The music of that becomes visible in new graces in their lives. Its beauty passes into their very faces. It blossoms out into flowers and fruits whose variety and richness adorn the character. This is true for the individual, but it is true in a still higher degree for the collective society, the Church. It is of the Church that John is mainly thinking. He sees the Lamb enthroned on Mount Zion. He sees Christ in His sacrificial aspect as the centre of the Church's worship, and then from that there flow out the new song and the voice of harpers harping with their harps. There is no mistaking the significance of this part of the vision. It tells us that the unity, the harmony, the sweetness, and the strength of the Church are conditioned upon the exaltation of the Lamb of God in its thought, and its worship, and its work. We know that this actually is so. History is the proof of it. Men have thought to unite on various grounds. Churches have sought to found themselves on opinions, on creeds, on doctrines, but Christ is greater than all these, and in the struggle to retain the form they have some-

times lost the spirit. In the fight for what they suppose right ritual and true doctrine, they have forgotten the leadership of the living, redeeming Christ without whom creeds and doctrines only become the swaddling bands of a corpse. But the fact I want to press is this—that no Church can long endure, can become a united, active, aggressive, fruitful Church that does not place Christ as the Lamb of God on the throne of its life. That is no empty assertion. History is strewn with the wrecks of Churches and societies that have tried to hold themselves together with other bands. Look, for instance, at the Unitarian Churches, at the Churches founded on a mere Theistic basis. Probably no section of any Church has ever had more brilliant minds in its service. If mere intellect and ethical teaching of the highest excellence could build up a Church and bind it together in unity and life, Unitarianism should be in the front rank. It has, or has had, men like Canning, Emerson, Parker, Collyer, Martineau, or Stopford Brooke—Martineau, the most brilliant of philosophers, Stopford Brooke, the most beautiful of English writers. Yet, what is the result? Long ago Martineau confessed that when he wanted to get the depths of his heart stirred he had to turn to the hymns of



Wesley and Cowper. Stopford Brooke left the English Church and took charge of a Unitarian chapel in London. I heard him preach there once. His sermons are masterpieces of ethics, and eloquence, and literary beauty, but he has given it all up. He confessed recently that he could stand it no longer. Surrendering the supernatural, he came to see that what was left was a mere council of perfection. "To exalt a mere ethical Christ, to teach morals alone as the sum of Christianity is," he says, "exactly the opposite of what Christ did."

Well, that is strong, too strong. It requires to be at once supplemented by the statement that Christ's morals are a mockery unless they are rooted in Christ's person as not only human but Divine. They are a pure dream unless they are packed up and filled in with the doctrine of Christ, the Redeemer, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Sundering from that they are—

"Like the bird's white wing above the hurrying river,  
We the white shadow that can reach it never."

And so the Unitarian Church in every age, as well as our own, lives for a while, but it does not grow.

It has no missionary power. It is stricken with spiritual paralysis. It has a high, austere, cold atmosphere that ultimately freezes up the emotions and sterilises the heart. St. John is right. The unity, the harmony, the orderliness, the rhythm of a Church depends not merely upon its belief in Christ as the perfect man. It depends ultimately upon its exaltation of Him as the Lamb of God. The nature is never really touched till it stands before the Cross and realises that He loved me and gave Himself for me. It is this personal salvation wrought out by Him through agonies untold that captures the heart, and sends the life forward to the music and the march of love. And this is what Christ founded His Church for. No ; that is not correct. He never designed that faith in Him should be a solitary thing. He never for a moment hinted that man could be complete outside union with the body of which He was the head. All His teaching was designed to show just the opposite of this, and rightly so. What a sad and imperfect thing is the man without a home, without a citizenship, without a nationality ! What makes a strong manhood is its organic union with a great race and a great empire. That secures its liberty, its development. Without that it is a thing devoid of roots, a mere rolling ball before

the wind. And what makes Christian manhood is absorption in the Church which is the body of Christ. What a stupid and crass idea it is that this should be a curtailment of individuality or of personal rights! A curtailment of these? Nay, it is their enlargement and their fulfilment. It is no more a narrowing of the nature than a child's life is narrowed by a home, or a citizen's life is narrowed by being set into the race and empire to which he belongs. And so that is what we need. That is what is laid on us as individuals. It is laid on us first of all to enthrone Christ in the summit of our thought, our desire, our love, and our life. And not the Christ merely in His perfect manhood, but the Christ as the Lamb of God who loves me and gave Himself for me. That, nothing but that, can capture and hold the affections. And then in order to retain, and grow, and develop, our life must be inserted into the Church which is the body of Christ. And what is laid on us as members of the Church is to do this same thing. It is to exalt Christ there, Christ as the Lord of men, because He has bought them with His blood. It is to bring everything within the Church—its work, its life, its ritual—into subordination to that supreme truth. The Church exists as the witness of this to the world. It exists to show that this

is the way to social and national harmony. It exists to bear witness to such harmony in its own corporate life, and to seek to translate it into the life of the world. And surely that is the supreme need of the hour. Look at the world. What a discord and a babel it is! How jarring, how lawless, how unmusical its life! What is wrong? "I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion," and then you know what came out of that. The new song, "the voice of many waters, the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Well, that is the prophecy of what might be, of what one day will be in a regenerated earth, when it learns that love is supreme; when it comes to know that the supreme object of its love is Christ—Christ the Lamb fore-ordained from the foundation of the world; when it enthrones this Christ on the height of its life, on the Mount Zions of its aims, its ambitions, its work, and its passions. Then, and not till then, will its discords cease. Then, and not till then, shall life hear and be fulfilled with that new song that rises like the voice of many waters from the lips of those who are without fault before the throne of God. Be it ours now to put ourselves under the gentle mastership of the Lamb of God, to enter and be educated through the Church, which is His body, that so when the full music

of that new song breaks upon our ears we shall not stand mute, shivering, and ashamed amid the mighty multitude who keep the joyous jubilee.

## XVII

### THE WRATH OF THE LAMB

REVELATION V. 16, 17.

THIS subject is another stage in that evolution which we have been tracing during successive chapters. It is not a pleasant subject, and therefore it is not a popular one. I would fain avoid it if I dare. I would do this, not because it is either unpleasant or unpopular, but because a fallible mortal shrinks from analysing or wielding the thunderbolts of Almighty God. It seems a great presumption. Mr. Moody once said, no one should speak about hell unless, he is full of love, and, alas ! that would shut the mouths of most of us. Few indeed possess this passion to such a degree as would entitle them to talk freely of the Divine judgment. No one can contemplate the possibilities of the lost as Scripture reveals them without a

shuddering awe. No one who adequately realises what they mean can speak of them save with stammering lips and bated breath. We sometimes talk of the gloom of the Puritans. What produced it? It was not natural moroseness. It was the overmastering consciousness of the awful seriousness of life. We live in an age that has largely lost that seriousness. It has lost it because it has lost faith in the Word of God which created and fed it. The Puritans were succeeded by a generation that repeated their creed without retaining their character. When that takes place the creed loses its force. It ceases to win the respect of man. It becomes the coffin of a dead faith which we do well to bury out of sight. And so we have come to a time that has swung away to the other extreme. We have come to believe that there is nothing to fear in God. He appears to us as the old Persian poet sung seven centuries ago—

“ ‘Why,’ said another, ‘some there are who tell  
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell  
The luckless Pots he marr’d in making—Pish!  
He’s a Good Fellow, and ’t will all be well.’ ”

“He is a good fellow, and it will all be well.” That is how God appears to not a few now. He is undiluted love, a summer sea of kindness, and

everything is working for the good of everybody. The idea of Him as angry, wrathful ; of a left hand, and a hell, and banishment for sinners—all that belongs to an exploded theology. We have left it far behind. If we have, so much the worse for us. No doubt our forefathers used language that was unwarranted. They preached sermons and dealt in pictures which it is well to forget and forgive, but it will go ill with us if we lose their seriousness of life, and the great facts which created and fed that seriousness. And that is the danger that besets us. I want, then, to speak this evening of the phrase, "The wrath of the Lamb." I may begin by saying, first of all, that there is a wrath element in the Divine Being. We cannot doubt that. He would not be complete without it. It is not necessary to go to Divine revelation for the assurance of it. We infer it from our own character. We know that there is a wrath element in it, and we are perfectly certain that if there were not, it would be beneath contempt. It is often fierce and misdirected, but it is there, and we would not be men and women without it. All the great writers tell us this. All the great imaginative creations contain the element. It is their indignation against wrong, it is the fire of their wrath against sin, and cruelty, and vice, and baseness that makes



them great. That is the very soul of their heroism. Carlyle was once present at a dinner party. The conversation turned on capital punishment. Mr. Monckton Milnes, better known as Lord Houghton, was arguing against it. Carlyle at last broke out, "None of your heaven and hell amalgamation companies for me. We do know what wickedness is. I know men I would not live with, men whom under some conceivable circumstances I would kill, or they should kill me. No, Milnes, there is no truth or greatness in that. It is just poor, miserable littleness. There was far more greatness in the way of your German forefathers, who, when they found one of these wicked men, dragged him to a peat bog, thrust him in and said, 'There, go in there, that is the place for all such as thou.'" Carlyle is by no means always a good guide in the higher things of the spirit, but he expresses in these vehement words the true attitude of a pure moral nature in its resentment against wickedness and wrong. Dr. Parker, discussing the overthrow of Sodom, puts the point thus: "Given a city that is full of corruption, every home a den of uncleanness, every imagination debauched, every tongue with the poison of asps beneath it, every child taught the tricks of imps, and prizes offered for the discovery of deeper depths of devil service—

given such a city, to know what is best to be done with it. Remonstrate with it? Absurd. Threaten? Feeble. What then? Rain fire and brimstone upon it? Yes. Conscience says yes. Justice says yes. Concern for other cities says yes. Nothing but fire will disinfect so foul an air. Nothing but burning and brimstone should succeed the cup of devils." These words are fierce, but we feel them to be true. The nature that is not stirred to resentment by the wickedness of a Sodom, the massacres of Alva, or the foul infamies of the unspeakable Turk, is lacking in completeness. It wants that moral resentment against wrong, and lust, and lechery, and treachery without which man is not man, and God is not God. It is only a waste of words to dwell on what all will be ready to admit.

Well, then, my second point is that Christ manifests the wrath element in His character. If He is to be a complete manifestation of the invisible God, we should expect this. We turn to His life on earth, and what do we find? We find this wrath element flaming forth both in word and deed. It is possible that in earlier times undue emphasis was laid on this side of His teaching. It is certain that in our time too little is placed upon it. He is spoken of as the tender, the merciful,

the gentle, the all-loving, and that is well. He welcomes the lost, speaks to the worst sinner who comes to Him in penitence the softest words, tells to them His most beautiful stories, and arches over them His bluest skies. "He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax." No, certainly not. Rejoice and be glad and proclaim this unparalleled love from the housetops. But let us not forget that that is only one side of Christ's character. Let us remember that there is another side, a side of darkness and of fierceness that should terrify some and that should awe us all. While the Son of Man had nothing but winsome words and full and free pardon for the stricken, the guilty, the publican, the harlot, there was another class against whom He denounced the most awful woes that ever fell from human lips. It is sometimes said that fear is a low motive to play upon, and the preacher who makes his appeals thereto is not popular in these days. Yet it is a very remarkable thing, as Horace Bushnell says, that no other preacher ever appeals so strenuously to the sense of fear, or employed with so little restraint the artillery of God's penalties as Christ did. The terrible and unpopular doctrine of future punishment is specially His. Previously the sanctions of religion had been temporal, and the future state

itself had been only dimly revealed. In two or three single passages of the Prophets indeed it had finally obtained a more distinct recognition, and pronounced its more fearful awards. But when Christ came He opened up formally and distinctly the great world of the future. He pressed home the claims of duty and repentance by the tremendous sanction of eternity. He uses without scruple in His language the most appalling terms. They are, it is true, many of them, figures of speech, but they are such figures as show that He is in no mood of delicacy. He is keyed up in the wrath principle as intensely, as heartily as in the love principle. He speaks to man as offended majesty should when it goes to rebels in arms. He denounces what He calls everlasting punishment, justice, death, fire, the worm that never dies, the gnashing of teeth, torment, the outer darkness, &c. What did Christ mean by such language? Surely He did not mean to scare us with bogies. That would degrade Him to the level of a moral mountebank. I cannot stop to state the precise meaning of these terms. Those who wish for a full and fair discussion of them I may refer to Principal Salmon's *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*. I only ask you to note first of all that they are new, almost every one of them. They have never

been heard of before, even under the pitiless rigour of the Old Testament, and secondly that they are from Christ, the All-merciful Saviour, the tender, suffering Friend of the world. It is this which makes them so terrible ; for there is nothing so awful as doom coming from the lips of love. We call Him Lamb, for God's mercy was never before revealed by sacrifice of so simple and unoffending innocence, and just so these are the wrath of the Lamb. It never before shook human bosoms by such words of doom and sanctions of eternal majesty.

Now, just before I pass to the last point, note here the peculiar kind of sin that drew forth the resentment of Christ. It has been well observed that every careful reader of the New Testament must have noticed that the sins which Christ saw round Him did not cause Him the shudder and the recoil which we might have expected. We find that He moves about familiarly with the notorious sinners of His time, with the outcasts, the publicans, the harlots. His manner with them is so free that He was sneered at as their friend, as in fact Himself a wine-bibber and a glutton. But there is one particular kind of sin that fills Him with amazement. It is the only sort at which He is ever said to have marvelled, and it is the sin

which the great majority of men do not regard as sin at all. What is it? It is the sin of not trusting Christ. It is the sin of not surrendering the heart and will to Him. It is, in one word, the sin of unbelief. There are multitudes who would be shocked if they committed a forgery or lied, or deceived, or murdered, but their conscience never stirs under this sin of unbelief. Yet to Christ this was the sin of sins. It is the root and stem from whence all the others issue. That men should look at Him and not give themselves to Him, that men and women dying for lack of love, and peace, and hope, and God should refuse to put out a finger to grasp them when they are brought in all their force and beauty to their sight, that to Christ was the inexplicable thing. "He marvelled at their unbelief." He marvelled at no other sin. It drew tears from His eyes. He wept over the very city which declined to receive Him even while He denounced its doom. The significance of that for us is unmistakable. This is a sin which is only possible in a Christian land where Christ is known; hence it touches us specially. Whatever light or deliverance there may be for the heathen, there can be none for those who having come within earshot of Christ and His glory turn aside from it in indolence or indifference. Why this sin

of unbelief should be thus the root and of all the rest I cannot now inquire. It is enough to say in passing that if the despisers of Christ's love and Christ's life could be well-pleasing to God, then both that love and that life would be a superfluity on earth. They would be a mere wanton waste without reason and without law.

Now, I come to the last point. The wrath of the Lamb is the wrath of love. That is the significance of this incongruous phraseology. The writer of this book is more careful about his thought than his metaphor. He sets a Lamb on the throne of the universe. It is a slain Lamb; yet it has power to open the book of life. Its blood is crimson; yet it washes white the robes of the redeemed. Though a feeble creation, it is the symbol of power and victory. Once the writer struck on what would appear to us a perfectly congruous imagery. "Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah!" The wrath of the lion? Yes we could understand that. The monarch of the forest springing to avenge its wrongs? That would have seemed an apt image of strength asserting its majesty; yet the writer only mentions it to pass on by it. It is not the wrath of the lion, it is the wrath of the lamb that he sees as an essential principle in the Divine nature. And is it not more awful when you come

to think of it? There is nothing so pathetic, so powerful as the wrath of love. Love must have in it this wrath element or it is vapid sentiment. What should we think of a mother that would allow her children to be outraged and defiled? What should we think of a life that could possibly permit the soiling or the slaughter of its beloved? We should turn from it with loathing, with contempt. If Christ is on the throne of the universe, He must vindicate the rights of those for whom He died, and who are dear to Him because He died for them. The wonder is that He holds back in delay. It is this that wrings the heart and makes the stricken lives cry out, "How long, O Lord?" But there is a day coming when the vindication shall be made. The love of God is not blind or unsleeping. The wrath of the Lamb is no mere verbal phraseology. It will flame forth sooner or later. It never is before its time, and never is behind. But the point to be noticed is that this wrath itself takes fire out of the heart of love. Though it appears wrath to those on whom it falls, yet it is the one way by which love can reach even them. You remember Pharaoh, to take a typical illustration. The love of God moves him to deliver His people Israel. He comes in conflict with Pharaoh's purposes. Then God takes Pharaoh



in hand. When the proud monarch would not be moved by the light, it is changed to the lightning. The plagues come. They are graduated in severity. They grow and increase in sternness and in terror. We say in human language, the anger of God is kindled into fiercer flame. But what is that anger? At the root of it is love. It is love not only for Israel, but even for Pharaoh himself; for the one thing which can save Pharaoh, if he can be saved at all, is the very severity of the Divine visitations. The one hope for the stupid, insensate pride of the man is to break its back and to level it with the dust. It is not cruelty that, it is mercy. The same thought, you may remember, is finely put by Robert Browning in the "Ring and the Book." In that poem there is a consummate villain. He is on trial for murders—a ghastly, fiendish crop of crimes. The case is remitted for final decision to the Pope. The Pope considers it, studies it, sees that the man has had warning after warning, weighs the possibility of future clemency, is convinced that it would only stiffen the guilty in his guilty career, concludes therefore that nothing but swift, sure punishment can save the man :—

"For the main criminal I have no hope  
 Except in such a suddenness of fate.  
 I stood at Naples once, a night so dark  
 I could have scarce conjectured there was earth

Anywhere, sky or sea or world at all :  
 But the night's black was burst through by a blaze—  
 Thunder struck blow on blow, earth groaned and bore,  
 Through her whole length of mountain visible :  
 There lay the city thick and plain with spires,  
 And like a ghost disshrouded, white the sea.  
 So may the truth be flashed out by one blow,  
 And Guido see, one instant and be saved."

The stroke is swift, and heavy, and awful, but that is its very mercy. The wrath of the Lamb is not the vindictive assertion of personal rights. It is the only way to reach and save the objects of its resentment. Will they be reached? Will they be saved here or anywhere else? Will this love of love be effective after all? These are searching questions, and solemn. Perhaps no definite answer ought to be returned. It surely would be good and great to think so, to trust if we could the larger hope, but there are ominous facts which point the other way. We do not see, for instance, that this wrath of love accomplishes its end in this life. It did not do so with Pharaoh. True, suffering changes some, but it seems only to harden and embitter others. Is there any reason to think it will ever change the nature beyond this life? If we are to take the New Testament as our guide, the trend of it seems to shut the door of hope. This Book lifts before us the awful visions which

disclose the vials of wrath falling on man, and man becoming more and more blasphemers of God. The judgments which began as discipline end as penal. Character tends to a final permanence. The wrath of the Lamb does not alter. There, as here, men apparently harden as it intensifies. "Lord, are there few that be saved?" asked His shuddering disciples once as He pressed on them the seriousness of the life eternal and the strenuousness necessary to attain it. "Are there few that be saved?" And He gave them no definite answer. He called their minds off from these speculative questions to the problem of personal concern. "Strive, agonise to enter in." Many questions rise regarding the wrath of the Lamb to which we can give no reply. There are awful breadths of promise and of doom which Christ has locked up in silence, and at the shut door we beat with frantic gesture, and beat in vain. But one thing shines clear on us as we close. The wrath of the Lamb is the wrath of love. In that lies its dreadfulness, for there is nothing so dreadful to meet as love that has been insulted and betrayed, and remains love still, but which we can no longer see as love, only as a torment and a terror. Then man's highest capacities become his fiercest tormentors. The agony is that love itself is inflicting

vengeance. Christ is not changed, nor God. He is the Lamb still. His truth, His purity, His love, are eternal, but sin's perversity has transformed them into avenging angels. May God deliver us from ever being of those who experience the wrath of the Lamb!

## XVIII

### THE WARRIOR LAMB

#### REVELATION XVII. 14.

“These shall make war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings.”

THIS subject follows in a sense naturally upon our last. Our last was, “The Wrath of the Lamb.” This one is, “The Warrior Lamb.” Recall to mind again, first of all, what the Lamb is. The Lamb stands for innocence, guilelessness holiness, sacrifice. In one brief word, but of infinite meaning, love. Well, St. John says this is going to be victorious. Everything that opposes love is going down. Every enemy that exalts itself against a holy and redeeming love has no future before it except the dust. “The Lamb shall over-

come them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." That was a wonderful thing to assert in John's day. He was ringed round with foes that proclaimed the opposite. The whole of statecraft declared such a thing to be the dream of a fanatic. Nations were armed to the teeth. Power was associated only with brute force, with kings and empires that could put the biggest battalions into the field. These were the mightiest. No, says St. John, it is not so. There is a mightier thing than all these. It is the might of a holy and redeeming love. I say that was incredible in John's day. It takes some effort to believe it even in our own. In face of the forces deploying around us, their vastness, their splendour, it is not easy to think that the type of life and spirit which Christ manifested is going to conquer, that kings, and empires, and battalions, and statecraft, and money powers are all going to give way before love, are all going to be the servants of the Lord of love, and He shall reign for ever and ever. No, it is not easy to believe this, and so that brings me to my second point. What are the grounds of this assertion? What reason have we to conclude that evil, that brute force, that all that is represented by the beast, will go down into the dust before the might of truth and love? The first, and I might also say

the final, answer, is, that it rests on revelation. It is a truth of the Bible, and of the Bible only. Unaided human reason fails to discover it. Nature gives no assurance of the final conquest of goodness and love.

“Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine, shrieks against the creed.”

Science does not predict it. Science reveals the terrific struggle going forward through countless ages, and ending at last in one great cataclysm which leaves our globe a burnt-out cinder, and humanity buried in a grave over which breaks no Easter dawn. Read the literature of to-day where the writers have drifted out of the light of the Christian faith. What is the characteristic of it? What is the goal which serious, imaginative geniuses like Hardy and scores more point as the end of the race? To them the whole history of mankind is one long martyrdom, and its battle for life to-day is a dark and fearful tragedy. The teaching and tendency of it all are—better to drop headforemost in the jaws of vacant darkness, and to cease. And when faith recoils from this dismal end, and retreats back upon the benevolence of God, it finds no long standing ground there. It is left like a drowning

sailor clinging on the ledge of a rock up to which is gradually creeping the salt, remorseless sea ; for the goodness of God did not hinder the beginning of evil. How can we tell whether it will end it or not? Thus a natural religion can never rise above its source, above the teachings of nature ; and if "these declare one fact more clearly than another," says Archbishop Magee, "it is this: that evil, whether moral or physical, is natural, is an inherent, inseparable element in all forms of creative life, and that to talk of final deliverance from it is not to believe, but to contradict the Bible of nature. But "we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." According to His promise. Yes, that is it. We believe that God has spoken, that the supreme Power that lies behind all phenomena has come out of the invisible, has revealed itself as life, and righteousness, and love—has revealed itself in an incarnate form in the Lord Jesus Christ. "These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." Let go that faith, cease to believe that God has broken the silence, that history is not the record of God's search for man, but of man's search for God, and there is no goal but pessimism and despair. And the proof of that simply lies in the



experience of those who have made the experiment. And so we believe in the final victory of God, of all that Christ stands for, because we believe Christ sits on the throne of power. That delivers us from the depressing consciousness of self-acting laws working out salvation or overthrow.

“Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,  
The eternal years of God are hers,  
But error wounded writhes in pain,  
And dies amid her worshippers.”

Quite so, but how do we know that? How can we be sure of it? We know it, and are sure of it, because it is not left to the operation of a mere self-acting law. It is the entrance of God Himself on the field. That is what Christ proclaims, that is what His cross declares. And there is nothing we need more to steady us in these days of drift than faith in this fact. There is a tendency among the half educated (which embrace the large majority of people) to talk of law as if it were a cause, and not the explanation of a process; to think of it as if it were somehow potent in itself, and not the expression of a supreme will. This is what belief in God and in Christ who is His revelation does for us. It brings us and all life and the world under the operation of a loving will and person, a

will and person to whom we can pray, in whom we can trust. It delivers us from the sullen tyranny of a soulless, heartless, abstract, mechanical, and remorseless law. Law indeed there is—inexorable, universal, eternal—but the law is only another name for the nature of God, and its operation and energy are only the streaming forth of His will and life into the world. Well, then, that is the ground on which we base our assertion of triumph, and history helps to verify it. Think of it. Eighteen hundred years ago one man stood for all that the victory of the Lamb implies. Eighteen hundred years ago Christ, a solitary man, lifted up the flag of this life that is to conquer, and called men to follow Him. He died and left it among a handful of disciples. He died, and round this small band who believed in Him the world rose to antagonise them. Rome, with its military might, philosophy, science—all were against them. Their enemies argued, they imprisoned, they slew, they crucified, they burned ; but as a torch, the more it is shook, it shines, so the more the faith was opposed, the stronger it grew. Slowly it sapped paganism. Slowly it won its way against Roman legions and Greek philosophy. It assimilated Judaism and left it behind. It saw the fall of imperial Rome, and rose like a phoenix from the ashes, and it took hold of the wild tribes that

swept down upon the imperial city—the Goth, the Vandal, and the Hun—and saved civilisation by transforming them. It lived through the infamies of the Middle Ages, and headed the column of advance in the succeeding centuries, and to-day the nations that own Christ as King march in the vanguard of the world's thought and power. Slowly the old ideals sunk in the advancing tide of Christ's ideas. Human life was ennobled. The child became sacred. The slave was set free. Art received a new inspiration, and the atmosphere in which it lives was created. Kings were taught that they were the servants of the people, not the people theirs. Brute force was put down, and men learned that the pen was mightier than the sword. The Magdalene was gathered in. Work was dignified. The old Roman poet began his great poem, "*Arma virumque cano*" ("Arms and the man I sing"). Christianity is reversing that sentiment. It puts the man first, and arms in a position second. Slowly but surely we see the qualities for which Christ stood alone eighteen hundred years ago ascending the place of power and ruling over men and nations. Slowly but surely we see the force of the beast being met and grappled with, and bound, and destroyed. Slowly but surely we see St. John's words verified. "These

shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings."

Look at it from another point. Thousands of years ago, when the human family broke up from its original home in the northern slopes of India, one great wave of emigrants poured south into India, the Asiatic Peninsulas, and on away down through the islands of the Pacific. The other great wave of migration went on westward, crept across the mountain barriers into Europe, and spread away through the German forests, and on to the shores of Britain and America. We in these southern islands are the descendants of that westward migration. We meet here to-day the last spent force of the other migration in the Maories of New Zealand. What makes the difference between the Anglo-Saxon and the Maori, the Papuan, the Cingalese, the Hindoo? It is this: That westward wave of migration met Christ. It came under the influence and the leadership of the Crucified. It is as demonstratively certain as you can demonstrate any truth in social evolution, that this is the main cause of the difference. Some people, when they take their walks abroad in history, like to keep to the sunny side of the road. But we must not forget that it is the twentieth

century in India, in New Guinea, in China, in Africa ; and if we want to know how far we have progressed, we must compare our condition not with what might have been, but with what we see in other countries where the revelation of Christ has not reached. One has no wish to belittle the life and advancement of China or India, and it is easy in the safe anchorage of a Christian land to speak comfortable words of what we know little about. I saw the other day a letter from one who went not long ago to labour for Christ in China. She said it is simply absolutely inconceivable the awful condition of that country. She had no conception of it in her wildest dreams. The population of China is a huge mass of life rotten beyond words, and festering into spiritual corruption. But even there God hath not left Himself without a witness, and the leaven is spreading. Thus Christ is winning. His ideas, His principles, the lamblike type of life is slowly drawing to the front.

But we must not forget that there is another side. We must not suppose that His truth will go on leavening the mass of humanity till the whole is leavened. There are some texts of Scripture which seem to indicate some such process, but it appears to me that the general trend of the Bible

points in the opposite direction. It appears to me that the great victory of good over evil, of Christ over the beast, will not be gained by the present natural forces that we now see in operation. St. Peter speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, but they are born of a tremendous break-up of the seen and the temporal. St. Paul predicts a falling away, and then the appearance of one supreme personality—the Man of Sin who will be destroyed by the brightness of our Lord's coming. In St. John, both in his letters and in the Book of Revelation, the same truth is insisted upon. In his vision here, as Christ advances to dominion, the shadows deepen, "the forms that rise out of the abyss grow more bestial and horrible. The beast succeeds the dragon, and the mouth of the beast speaks still fiercer blasphemies, and Babylon the great grows still mightier, and she whose name is mystery is drunken with the blood of the saints;" and then heaven opens. The material order has a sudden irruption of the supernatural. He whose name is Faithful and True comes forth to judge and to make war in righteousness, and to win that triumph which shall acclaim Him King of kings and Lord of lords. Of the exact meaning of all these details we know little. The beast, and the woman, and the dragon have been identified with

this and that historical person and nation. It may or it may not be so ; but whatever the historical verification may be, it does not supersede this fact : that as the cause of Christ goes forward, it creates ever intenser antipathy. The progress of His coronation provokes all the baser elements in the world and out of it, and they gather themselves together for one supreme effort. Thus good and evil will go on, as Professor Denny in his Commentary on Thessalonians points out, developing along parallel lines, the good getting better, and the bad growing worse, till they meet in one last decisive conflict. "These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." It is well for us to realise this. It saves us from dejection and disappointment by the opposition of evil. The beast in humanity is constantly shaking himself loose, and rising up when we thought he had been killed. Nothing is more surprising than this sudden recrudescence of old evils and sins, and nothing is more disheartening. We are inclined sometimes to lose hope of the final victory of good. But let us remember that both are to grow together till the harvest. We wrestle with invisible powers, with powers not affected by the growth of civilisation, nor moved save to fiercer hostility by Christian influences. These forces

exist. They have existed. They will continue to exist, and their malignity and energy will increase as the end of their day draws near; so that the evening of the present dispensation will be an evening red with blood.

One other thing. This vision of the warrior Lamb in the invisible gives a new breadth and height to our earthly life. We are often inclined to live within narrow horizons. Men once thought this earth was the centre of the universe. Now we know it is but a speck amid myriads of vaster worlds, and so we must learn to think of our spiritual combat. We are not to suppose that the war with evil which we wage here is a small thing, or that we are engaged in it alone. It is part of an immense conflict whose limits reach beyond our utmost conception. Evil had not its origin on this earth. It existed long before man appeared, and the battle with its forces here is part of a vaster order of things. It is an incident in a great age-long conflict which has been going forward, and is now going forward, in the universe. Out of that unseen are issuing swarms of the hosts of evil. There is war in heaven. Michael and his archangels are extirpating the legions of evil from the invisible. It may be that that statement about the devil being driven out means



that he and his myrmidon have chosen this earth for their last stand. It may be that this explains the tremendous trials that are to usher in the close of this dispensation. It may be, I say, but we do not know. Enough for us to know this: that in our war with evil within us and round about us we are not alone. The beginning and the ending of this fight lie outside this temporal order. They belong to the unseen and the eternal. This gives us a new and solemn significance for life. It redeems it from the littleness into which it constantly tends to drift. It widens our horizon. It lifts us out of the stifling thoughts of earth. It lets us know that issues far beyond our ken depend upon our conflict with evil in this brief life of ours. It puts a new courage into us to realise that the frontiers of sense are not the frontiers of spirit, and that the limits of the seen and temporal do not exhaust the possibilities of things. To those who live by this faith life may have much to cast down, but it will not be overthrown; while others who have it not—

“Watch a world bereft of light,  
For ever wrapped in unsunned gloom,  
Whose only tranquil time seems night,  
Whose happiest hope and rest, the tomb.

You watch the life and know that God  
So guides the soul to heaven above,  
They only see the smiting rod,  
You know the power that smiles is—Love.

They see a world that wildly whirls  
Through curling clouds of battle smoke,  
And drenched with blood the children's curls,  
And women's hearts by thousands broke."

You see a host above it all,  
Where angels wield their conquering sword,  
And thrones may rise, and thrones may fall,  
But comes the kingdom of the Lord."

"These shall make war against the Lamb, and  
the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of  
lords, and King of kings."

## XIX

### OVERCOMING THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

#### REVELATION XII. II.

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."

THIS subject is not directly connected with the main idea of these studies. That idea is to follow the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb. It is to follow the road by which Christ advanced to victory. The idea of this chapter is to show how those who believe in Him share His victory, to show how they overcome through the blood of the Lamb. It is so personal and so practical a truth, and so closely related to our main subject, that I stay upon it here. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."

Overcame whom? The devil, the accuser, the beast. We are all conscious that life is a battle. We are all conscious that we are overcoming or being overcome. Here is the business man or the professional man busy with his work. He knows he is overcoming it, or it is overcoming him. He knows that he is getting a soul out of it, or it is taking the soul out of him. Here is the world. We need not define it particularly. Each one has his and her own world. Each one, that is to say, is aware of a lower and a higher that meets him every day. It meets him in thought, in labour, in joy, in sorrow, in desire, in duty. He is called to wrestle with this lower and higher. He is overcoming it, or it is overcoming him. Every day, every hour, we are thus challenged, and thus life is one long struggle. St. John, looking at the dark side of life, at the evil, and the sin, and the solicitations thereto, pushes them all back to this source. He sums them all up in one supreme personality out of whom they issue. He sees humanity in a struggle with its age-long enemy. He sees Christ casting him out, driving him down out of the heights of life, out of heaven, down, down to earth, and out of earth down to the bottomless pit. He sees others sharing in Christ's victory. He sees them overcoming the evil one

through the blood of the Lamb. Now, I want to try to show how we are thus overcoming evil and the evil one through the blood of the Lamb.

First, let us look into our own experience.

When we begin to treat ourselves seriously, we become conscious that we have not been the men and women we should have been. There merges in our thought that tremendous word "ought." We know we ought to have done this and that, and we have not done it, and we blame ourselves because we have not. It is not necessary that we should be Christians to have this consciousness. It exists where Christ is not known and the Bible never heard. Pagans and heathen have it. It led them to build altars, and flood them with blood to get quit of it, but with us that consciousness is pointed and deepened. It is pointed and deepened because we live in larger light. That is the penalty we pay for being born in these last days, and in a Christian land. We discover that we stand not only in relation to our fellow-men, and owe them duties, we stand also in relation to God, and we owe Him duties as well. What these are we have in our hands here. As we read and meditate, the consciousness of missing the mark, which is one of the Biblical words for sin, deepens within us. We should have loved

God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and might, and our neighbour as ourselves, and we know that we have not done that. We know that we have transgressed that law times and ways without number. That is sin, and the wages of sin is death. For a long time perhaps talk of this sort is mere words to us. We read about it. We listen to sermons. We sing hymns that express it, but the truth itself does not grip us. It is like the pictures on the wall, very near and interesting in a way, but without life and vividness. Some day, however, the pictures become alive. Some day they step down out of their frames and touch us. Some day these words about sin, and guilt, and remorse, and condemnation, and death, swell out, and stick, and sting, and burn in the soul. It may be at the very beginning of the Christian life. It may be long after we have set out on the road. Indeed the quite curious thing is that it is only as we struggle upward, we come to know the tremendous forces that are banded together to hold us down, and the tremendous guilt of insolence or disobedience. Well, some day this consciousness of guilt and remorse takes us. It may be we have wronged a friend, soiled a soul, ruined a life. Through that single sin the sea of sin opens,

widens, and comes flooding in, and we know what guilt means. The wronged one forgives us. That does not matter. You do not forgive yourself. You cannot. Conscience has no power to forgive till an adequate atonement is made, and that atonement is impossible, for the deed cannot be undone. The wronged one may be with the dead, but even if their forgiveness does reach us, it only deepens the sense of our own demerit. Why is this? Why do we continue to blame ourselves, to blame ourselves all the more because of the generosity of forgiveness? Why cannot the conscience forget sin and have done with it, as it forgets a mistake and has done with it? We do not blame ourselves if we cannot write poetry, or are not seven feet high, but we do blame ourselves if we betray love, or disobey the moral law. Why? Because we have come into collision with God. Our conscience which stirs, and stings, and burns, is but reporting Him there. It is the meeting-place between Him and us. It is the throne on which He takes His seat, and the blame we feel, and the remorse that bites, and the shame that shakes and stupefies, are the echoes of His voice preluding judgment and condemnation, and the range of offences widens as the years increase, and through that opening up of the possibilities of one sin we

see those of a lifetime, Godward and manward, spreading out wide as the heavens and deep as the fathomless sea. You may think these words exaggerated or applicable only to gross sinners, but it is just the reverse. It is a Luther, a Bunyan, a Paul, a Catherine Booth, the saints of the ages, that will be readiest to admit these truths, and it is the characters opposite to these who think them incredible. Now, what is to be done when that past of transgression rises upon us overwhelming? The ages since ever man began have been grappling with that question. It has crushed and pressed down on the human soul, and the soul has tried to get free by the blood of bulls and of goats. Yea, it has given the fruit of its body for the sin of its soul. This awful consciousness of guilt and remorse is Satan's trump card. If he can keep the consciousness of it from stirring, or if, when it has begun to stir, he can drive it to despair, the day is his. But it is just at this point that Christ steps in. It is just here we overcome by the blood of the Lamb. When the eyes are open to see that the death of Christ blots out the handwriting of the law against it, cancels the bond of sin; when we come to know that at the Cross justice and mercy have kissed each other, peace reigns in the conscience. It reigns in the con-



science because God and it have met in that supreme unity which the death of His Son supplies. The Christian centuries assure us of this wonderful thing, and truly it is the most wonderful thing in this world. We do not cease to condemn sin. We do not cease to feel our unrighteousness and our wrong-doing, but the conscience which has known the touch of the blood of the Lamb is purged. Its overwhelming sense of guilt is taken away. Its accusings are turned into songs of praise. The sinner realises that he died with Christ, that he is risen with Christ, that he shares in the freedom, the forgiveness, the exaltation, which God has conferred on Christ. His justification is not a thing that is in himself. It is in Christ. Nor is it a thing which needs to be renewed. It is done once and for ever. It covers not only the sin of the past, but of the present and the future. Pardon indeed must be daily and hourly sought, but the justification sealed by the blood of the Lamb is something which is outside ourselves. It is a great and permanent blessing which cannot be touched by the infirmities of the fallen, the sins which are daily confessed and daily need pardon. Thus we overcome the guilt of sin because of the blood of the Lamb, and it can be overcome. Experience testifies in no other way. But now

merges another point. If God can in harmony with His justice thus freely remit sin because of the blood of the Lamb, He must require some expression of penitence on our part, and some guarantee for our future righteousness. Our expression of penitence is the acceptance of His own gift of forgiveness. It is faith in Christ, and what is the guarantee of our future righteousness? It is a twofold one. First, it is the creation of love within ourselves. When we come to realise what it means, that Christ loved me and gave Himself for me, the barriers of selfishness give way. Behind these barriers was the stronghold of sin ; for sin in its human analysis is an abnormal emphasis of self. Very well, when we realise what sin is, and where it was leading to, and when we apprehend the sacrifice of God in Christ, the heart is touched. "He loved me and gave Himself for me." That, when understood in all its implications, unseals the fountains of love. Love is ever, even in its lower form, a deliverance from self. It is the lifting up of another to whom we do homage, and when that other is the highest of all, the Christ of God, it becomes a guarantee of our future righteousness. Why? Because love tends to transform us into the likeness of the beloved. Love writes the likeness of its object

on our very face almost. The love of money, for instance, reports itself in the light of the miser's countenance, just as surely as the love of Christ reports itself in the face of the saint; and this love is not mere admiration for the character of Christ. That belongs to anybody. Those who do not admire Him, it has been said, have in a sense committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. No, it is something deeper and tenderer than this. It is a passion that springs up responsive in the heart. We love because He first loved us, but that guarantee is not enough for our future righteousness. It is a help to overcoming, but it is not a complete security. Why not? Because its source is in ourselves. It is dependent to some extent on our own modes and works. When we love the saintly dead, it is wholly of this character. A man, by reading Tennyson, or Shakespeare, or St. Paul may grow into an ardent and passionate attachment to them. He may come to think, and feel, and live, and be like them. Love will act as this transforming power, but they do not love him in return. They never knew him. They might not if they did. And here we are at the point that marks all these off from Christ. Christ lives. He is not dead and away. He knows us. He loves us. He is the very passion of God come

down into our midst. He is the very life of God around us all at this moment. That is the next point I want to make. Sin reports itself not only as guilt in the conscience. It reports itself as power in the life. Its guilt is met by the revelation of justification through the death of Christ. Its power is met by the doctrine of an indwelling Christ. That is the second meaning that belongs to the blood of the Lamb. Blood, as we saw in an earlier chapter, meant not only death, but life. It was the symbol of the vital element. So it appeared in the Levitical ritual. So it was set forth in all the ancient sacrificial systems. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb, then, because the life of which that blood is the symbol is poured into us through the channels of faith and love. Christ does not bid us go and sin no more, and leave us to ourselves. Forgiveness is only half the gospel. There could be no gospel without it. There could be no complete gospel if it were all, and so in every possible way the New Testament tries to bring this home to us. Christ tells us that unless we drink His blood we have no life in us. What does He mean? He means that unless His own vitality is poured into us, ours will sink and die. He tells us He is the Vine and we are the branches. He is the head and we are the body.

Metaphors are taxed to their utmost to bring home this closeness of relation between the life of the believer and the life of the Redeemer. It is this which is the final guarantee of our future righteousness. It is this which secures our hope of ultimate triumph over the power of sin. Were we dependent only on a great event which covers our past, or in a love within us capable of being kept burning by our own effort, we should despair. But Christ died for our sins, and rose, and reigns, and sends forth His Spirit for our sanctification and our glorification. A father adopts a son, taking him out of the street. He surrounds him with culture. He sends him to school and to college. Yet, in spite of it all, some grossness, some outlashes of the old nature, spring forth now and again. What is wanted to transform that boy into the likeness of his foster parent? Suppose the latter could pour into him his own life. Suppose he could transmit to him his own character, and the qualities that distinguish it. That would accomplish the result. Well, that is what God actually does. That is what Christ comes to declare. He brings us into the Divine family. He surrounds us in the home and the Church with educative influences, with powers, and thoughts, and lives that make for righteousness.

But that is not all. These are only at the best forces outside us. Well, what then? This. When He adopts us into the family and household of faith, He adopts us also into the very generation of divinity. We become sons of God, not as every man is by natural generation, but by spiritual generation. We are born again. He begets us anew. He pours His life into us through the channels of faith in His Son. We become sons of God, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. Thus the power of sin is broken, is flooded out. Thus the guarantee of final victory is secured. Thus we overcome the evil within us by the blood of the Lamb, by receiving into us the eternal life of the Son of God. And now, all this may seem a theological discussion, but truth can never be sundered from duty without treachery to both, and a very solemn issue merges out of what I have been trying to explain. I began by saying that life is a battle. It is a struggle for existence, and there are but two sides, and we are marching either with the conquering or the conquered. How is it with us, then? "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Are we overcoming, or are we being overcome? These are just the two possible issues, and there is but one way to victory. It is by the blood of the Lamb. The

death of Christ is the ground of our justification, and cancels the guilt of sin. It has relation to our past. His life transmitted to us is the guarantee of our triumph over the power of sin, and has relation to our future, and the channel through which this comes is our acceptance of the great gifts, and that is expressed by our faith in and love to the bringer of them, the Lamb of God. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Do you find this note of overcoming where that blood has lost its significance for the life? You have only to turn and look around you. You have only to open the books and read the literature and the philosophy from which it has disappeared. Does the music of victory march through the pages of those who have ceased to draw their inspiration from Christ as the eternal Son of God? It certainly does not. A great writer whose knowledge of such gives him authority to speak, says this: "That the scepticism of the serious men of our time is entirely with the Church in maintaining that apart from Christ evil is the dominant power in human life. What is the meaning of the great realistic school of literature that holds the stage at present? What is the meaning of Ibsen, Hardy, Gissing, Zola, Moore, and others of lesser note? What does it mean

but this, that fate is lord of all? What does it mean but this, that there is no escape from the shackling chains of retribution and remorse? What does it mean but that there is no deliverance from sin, except by dissolution or death? and what is this but the confession that human life is worsted in the conflict? It has not overcome." Yes, they are right, these writers. Black and repulsive and terrible as some of their books are, they yet make for righteousness. They help to draw us to the faith, the only faith that will bring victory over the beast within us, and the world without us. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." "I die," said one, "resting on oaths, covenants, and blood." Yes, they are the only pillows for the dying head, and they are also the sure foundations for the wavering feet of the living. Over the grave where the body of William Carey waits the Redeemer's return are the words so dear to our forefathers, so necessary to ourselves if our life is to overcome—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Thy kind arms I fall,  
Be Thou my strength and righteousness—  
My Jesus and my all."



## XX

### THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

REVELATION XIX. 7-9.

"Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

**I**N the Introduction I said that nothing is what it seems. All things are linked together. Everything is a symbol, a shadow, an image of something else. A man says he will only deal with facts. Very well, what is a fact? Land, iron, houses, steam-engines, gold, wheat; but subtract mind from these, and where are they? Nowhere. They suggest mind. They have no significance without mind, and mind itself, what is it? Subtract life, and where is mind? Subtract the personality that thinks, and where is thought? Thus everything in its final analysis comes up out

of life, suggests life, is a symbol of life. Now, that is our starting-point. Here is this institution of marriage. What is it? Marriage is a serious thing if you take it in that way, as Mr. Brook in *Middlemarch* says about a funeral, but it is not often taken that way. It is frequently a subject for a jest. It is not seldom lightly entered upon. Its profound symbolism, its far-reaching significance, is rarely thought of. My subject is, "The Marriage of the Lamb." It is a subject that can easily be vulgarised. It can be vulgarised for the same reason that the finest poems make the finest parodies. The higher you climb, the deeper you fall. The worst is the best self-corrupted. The subject is one of profound delicacy. Let us put the shoes from off our feet, for the place where we tread is holy ground. Scripture is full of hints of the consummation here. Look through the Old Testament, and you will find this idea everywhere. God is spoken of as the husband of Israel. His people are described as married to him. When they fail in their love towards Him, it is spoken of as the sin of an unfaithful wife. Idolatry is adultery. It is the breaking up of a marriage bond. It is the harlot's crime. The most pathetic picture of this is in Hosea. Hosea's wife had been unfaithful to him. She left him for another. She

sunk down into shamelessness and sin, but Hosea did not desert her. His love was not dead. It went out to her. It brought her back. It brought her home. Then he began to think over it all. He began to see that that was just God's relation to His people. They have done what his wife did, and God will do what he did. He will not be less than Himself. His love will not desert Israel. No, "I will betroth them unto Me for ever, and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." The Prophets are full of this imagery, so are the poets. The 45th Psalm pulsates with the idea. Then one whole book, the Song of Songs, is an allegory based on the same thought. On the other hand, as our greatest Old Testament commentator, Ewald, says, "A king in all the splendour of his glory, transported with admiration, pulsating with passion; on the other the poor and simple shepherd to whom the Shunammite has pledged her faith, the former present, the latter absent, the maiden called to decide fully between these two rivals, such is the dream of love in the 'Song of Songs.'" When we turn to the New Testament the idea is carried forward. It is made clearer and more profound. Christ opens His ministry at a wedding. He calls Himself elsewhere the Bridegroom. One of His

greatest parables deals with the subject of marriage. It portrays the King of Heaven under the imagery drawn from it. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Writing to the Ephesians, he explained the deeper significance of the ordinance. He founds it in Christ and His relation to His people. The same idea had taken strong hold of St. John. It is he only who makes the ministry of Christ begin with a wedding, and the significance of that lies in this, that John's Gospel is not chronological. It is logical. It is a setting forth of the great, inner, spiritual meaning of Christ's history. In his Gospel he often recurs to the imagery. When you come to this book here the idea grows clearer and clearer. He pictures the enemies of Christ and His kingdom under the figure of a harlot, and the homage paid to her. The harlot sits on a throne. She receives the service and loyalty and love of the great ones and the multitudes of the earth. The true bride has fled into the wilderness. She is an exile. She is forgotten. But her day is coming. God whispers to her, "I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals when thou wentest with Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Such fidelity shall have

its reward. And so, as the book rounds to its close, it ends with a casting out of the harlot and devotees. It ends with a magnificent "Hallelujah" chorus, "Salvation and glory and honour belong to our God, for He hath judged the great harlot." It ends with a vision of the true bride's advent, and the clash and clang of merry wedding bells. "Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." That is where we are in this stage of the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb. We are at the marriage of the Lamb. Now, what is the significance of all this mysterious truth regarding the marriage relation between God and man that we find running all down revelation? It is not difficult to get hold of the central idea of it. What is marriage? It is the coming together of two lives in the deepest possible unity. It is the surrender of separate individuality and the mingling of each in a common stream. This is the ideal marriage. This is what we see of it as a mere secular institution. But marriage is more than a secular institution. Like everything else, it is a symbol, an image, a window through which we look into more wonderful and mysterious truth. When we turn to the Word of God, and ask what marriage is, we find this idea of the unity of two

lives expressed in the strongest possible terms. In marriage, in the ideal marriage, the two become one flesh. It does not rest on a civil contract like a business partnership. It rests on a mysterious change affecting the very substance of their body, and blending two lives into a physical and spiritual oneness. This is the reason why Christ absolutely prohibited divorce, or at any rate only allowed it for one cause. That cause was such as broke up the unity and resolved the two lives into their separate individualities again. But the idea underlying Christian marriage is the unity of the two lives that enter into the marriage bond. They become one. The man and woman who love one another delight in all that is or seems to be most beautiful and good. It is even a kind of joy to know each other's troubles and bear each other's faults. They find comfort and hope and strength in their mutual affections. Their very trials bring them closer. They learn to suppress self, to think how they can do and be the very best for each other. That is the ideal, and in many marriages it is realised, and when it is you get happy homes, and when you have happy homes you have the most blessed thing in all this world. But to realise such a unity something more is needed than the blending of

two lives. The New Testament assumes that such a realisation is impossible unless another be taken into the marriage bond. That third Person is Jesus Christ. If He is left out the ideal unity will never be attained. It will not, it cannot stand the strain and pressure of the world. It will break like a stick and pierce the hand that leans on it. Multitudes do this, and the result is that we have not homes where harmony reigns, but homes that are sordid, and vulgar, and courteously cold, running on into pain and sorrow, and culminating in what are little less than pocket copies of hell. Now, you remember how Paul puts the truth about this in explaining marriage to the Ephesians. To him all the institutions of this earthly life have a spiritual significance. They are copies of Divine ideas. Marriage is not merely a civil contract. It is something more than a mere animal union or a secular ordinance. It is a Divine symbol, a symbol of what? Of Christ and His relation to the believer, to the Church. While He is dictating these wonderful words on the first page of the Bible, those words which declare the mysterious unity of life that marriage creates, while he is dictating these, "I think," says Dr. Dale, "I see a look of dreamy abstraction come over his face, showing that his thoughts have passed from earthly to

heavenly things. He is in the presence of the transcendent unity between Christ and His redeemed. He is thinking of how Christ forsook all things that He might make us for ever one with Himself, that our earthly life might become His, His heavenly life ours. Forgetting for the moment that he was writing about marriage, he exclaims 'The mystery, the secret of the unity of Christ and His people, the Divine purpose which from all ages had been hid in God, but was now revealed. The mystery is great.'" That is the groundwork of earthly marriage. That is the background from which its light and lifting come. That is what redeems it, and purifies it, and exalts it. It is meant to lead up to, and lose itself in, and be fulfilled by, the Divine eternal life of Christ. It is an image, a shadow, a symbol of that. And now we are able to understand what is meant by the marriage of the Lamb. It is the final and perfect blending in one unity of the life of Christ and His people. Just as an earthly union the two become one flesh, so with the great spiritual union Christ and His redeemed are brought together. They are brought together not in place, but in character. They are brought together completely. The Divine and the human cease to be divided. They are blended into one. God is all and in all. That is



the marriage of the Lamb. All the evolution of history has been heading for that goal. God from all eternity purposed to bring man into this deep union with Himself. As we have seen, a note of it sounds all down revelation. His people are betrothed to Him. They are, as we say, "engaged," but the engagement has never issued in marriage. What has hindered? What has kept them asunder? Sin. It is sin that has blinded love, that has obscured the true nature of the bridegroom, and hindered the heart from full acceptance. Now and again, indeed, there have been approaches to it. With a few the ideal has come within sight of realisation even on earth. In one, indeed, it actually was achieved, in Christ the Divine and human blent in an absolute unity, and out of that blending came a life serene, sweet, strong, holy, blessed, a life at whose feet the front ranks of the world ever since have bowed in rapture and in awe; and no wonder, for what a life it was! It held the sea in the hollow of its hand. It touched disease, and it fled. It looked at wrong, and wrong fell into the dust before it. It permitted itself to be nailed to a cross, and lo! it made the cross a throne, and set a triumphant song in every heart of sorrow. Well, a day is coming when that type of life will

not be the exceptional. It will be everywhere. A time draws on when that unity of God and man whose reality Christ demonstrated will be accomplished in all His people. Now it is hindered and kept back by sin. Now the engagement is postponed, or weakened, or broken off here and there, but a day is coming when that will all end. A day is coming when the false loves and false unions will be cast aside, when the eyes shall be opened to see the true Bridegroom, the King in His beauty ; the perfected, completed union of Christ and His people, in will, in heart, in love, in life, shall be consummated, and God shall be all in all. That is the marriage of the Lamb. "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage of the Lamb." Blessed, yea, surely ; for see what flows out of this unity, righteousness, purity, harmony, fellowship, with the highest rapture.

"Without, within, is light, is light,  
Around, above, is love ;  
They enter to go out no more,  
They raise the song unsung before,  
They doff the sackcloth that they wore,  
For all is joy above."

And observe when this takes place, and how. It takes place at the marriage of the Lamb. And

what, again, is the marriage of the Lamb? It is the union of Christ and the human soul. It is the soul opening itself to Him. It is He pouring His new, fresh, clean, eternal life into it. That is the essence of Christianity. That is what sets it apart from all other religions. That is what transforms it from a philosophy to a gospel. It rests on this fact of vital relationship between the soul of the believer and Christ its Redeemer and its eternal Lord. People sometimes suppose that all that is necessary for Christian morality is to take the words of the gospel, the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching of Christ, and go and do them; that there is no more difference in mind, only in degree, between Christian ethics and the ethics of Mahomet, or Buddha, or Confucius. No difference save in degree? There is an infinite difference. It is the difference between a dead teacher and a living, ever-present spirit. It is the difference between flowers sundered from their roots and the flowers this spring day drinking in, being fulfilled with the inflowing, uprising, multitudinous life of nature. When Paul writes to his Colossian converts about their duties and their ethics, what does he do? What does he tell them? Does he tell them about the Sermon on the Mount? Does he repeat to them the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels? No;

He does nothing of the sort. He tells them of a crucified but risen Christ. He tells them that they have risen with Him, that His resurrection carried with it theirs, that they have to look to no dead teacher. They have to connect themselves with a Christ living, renewing, enlightening, recreating their whole soul and body. Every duty can be seen in that light. Every motive for morality is found in it, and it is found nowhere else. Take away the consciousness of this relationship, and the Christian ethic is a mere kite in the air, cut loose from its earthly connection. "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And who are called? You, and you, and you. The commission runs to the servants, "Come, for all things are now ready. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come."

"Ascend, Beloved, to Thy throne,  
This is the day of days,  
To-night the bridal song is sung,  
To-night ten thousand harps are strung  
In sympathy with heart and tongue,  
Unto the Lamb's high praise."

Is it not a wonderful invitation? Is it not a magnificent culmination of life? Yes; but there is something more wonderful than that. What? That men should make light of it. That men

should set it aside. Christ said that there were many who would do this. Christ took extraordinary pains to warn people against the possibility. You read those parables of His about the King's invitation. What is it strikes you about them? Their unnaturalness. Some years ago people were jumping over each other's shoulders to be present at the Queen's Jubilee, and those who were received to an audience and a supper with her became famous ever afterwards, and yet, when an invitation is issued to men from the King of kings, how careless they are about it! God calls them into fellowship with Him, a fellowship that will give them purity, righteousness, peace, power, fellowship with the noblest souls of the universe, and a life for evermore, and it is declined. It is made light of. It is treated frivolously. It is criticised. It is sniffed and sneered at, and for what? For what is it set aside? Listen, O Heaven, and give ear, O earth—for a piece of land, for sheep and cattle, and horses, for a wife, for the ease and comfort of a home that fifty years hence will be in the dust. Is not this incredible? Surely Ruskin is right: "I do not wonder at what men suffer. I wonder at what they lose."

## XXI

### THE LAMB AS A LAMP

REVELATION XXI. 23.

"The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

I N our previous chapter we spoke of the marriage of the Lamb. We found that to mean what marriage on earth means. It is in its ideal the unity of two lives, not a unity in which individual qualities are merged and lost (that would not be unity but union), but a unity of which Nature is a symbol—Nature with her endless variety, and yet all the product of one universal life. The marriage of the Lamb therefore means the time that is coming when the Divine and the human lives shall be no longer what they largely are now, separate, diverse, jarring, but when they

shall come together in one perfect unity. When that takes place, everything else follows. What follows is recorded in this chapter. Here we have a vision of the city and society that such a union creates. I want to speak of the functions of the Lamb in the new eternal society outlined in this chapter. John says that He is the lamp of God—"The glory of God doth lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb." Now, we have all heard and read these words how many times? Scores, hundreds. They seem very simple. In reality they cover the deepest and profoundest problems of life and mind.

In a former chapter we saw that there was a Lamb fore-ordained from eternity. In other words, that there has been in God an eternal, loving, and therefore eternally active and redeeming life. Think how that thought is reached. It is a truth of revelation. Men could never gain such knowledge unless God chose to make it known. Let us try to understand that. When the human mind sought to shake itself clear of gods many and lords many, when it tried to penetrate back before all time and all creation, back to the one supreme God from whom issued everything, it was met by this difficulty. There cannot be the consciousness of self without at the same time the

consciousness of something that is not self. A subject implies an object. A thinking mind can only exist when there is something on which it can exercise itself. Now, when reason pushes its way back to the supreme first cause, to the eternal One who was before all things, and in whom all things consisted, this was the problem that it encountered. A sole, unrelated, solitary person is inconceivable. It is inconceivable because, as I say, you cannot have a consciousness of self without at the same time postulating a not-self, any more than you can have an upper without a lower, or hills without a hollow. How is this difficulty met? One school of thought—known as Pantheism—met it by practically giving it up, by saying that there is but one underlying substance out of which all things came, and by which all things subsist, but this substance, or force, or spirit, or God, is unconscious. It could not be anything else, because if it be the All, the Infinite One, then there is no room for anything else outside, and since you cannot have a consciousness of self without a consciousness of a not-self, nothing remained but to deny mind and consciousness to the Infinite. In some of its modified forms, however, this school of philosophy, pressed with the difficulty of getting a rational universe out of an irrational cause, affirms that



God becomes conscious in man, that human life is the transitory embodiment of the Divine constantly coming up like foam bells on the ocean, and then sinking back into it again. Another school of thought—Deism—enthroned the supreme God away in solitary state, affirmed His unity, but met the difficulty to which we are referring by filling up the chasm with a series of emanations of created creatures. This is what Unitarianism has to do. Its ablest representative in our day, or perhaps in the whole history of that creed, is Dr. Martineau. He had, like all Unitarians, like all who really think on the subject, to face this problem. Before all creation and all time God was. He existed as a sole, solitary unit, but if a self-conscious being, free, rational, living, needs another of self on which to exercise these powers, where did God get this other self? What constituted it? Pantheism, as we have seen, gave up the problem. It denies that the first cause can be conscious. Unitarianism represented by Dr. Martineau, the greatest philosophic thinker of our time, finds this other self in the aggregate of rational and moral beings represented in the world by man. But observe what is implied in that. Either this aggregate of rational and moral beings who represent the other self of God were eternal, or they were not. If

they were eternal, then you have beings who have coexisted with God, and being separate from Him from the beginning, and yet are not Gods. If they were not eternal, then God was imperfect till they were created, and therefore practically no God at all. In the one case you have a race of beings coeternal with God, and yet not equal with God. In the other case you have a God whose nature and essence are not love and fatherhood from all eternity, but who only acquires these in time, acquires them when He called the other race of beings into existence. This Deism and Unitarianism are impaled on the horns of a dilemma, either of which is absolutely fatal to its philosophy. Now, let us see how Christianity, as interpreted by St. John, meets this supreme problem. He meets it by the doctrine of the Logos. He meets it by the supreme theology which he outlines in the first chapter of his Gospel. What is that theology? It starts from this fundamental principle—the invisibility, the inscrutability of God. No man hath seen God at any time, and no man can ever see Him, or ever will see Him, for He is pure spirit. No man hath seen God. Do we wonder at that? Why, we cannot see ourselves. We cannot see each other. We can only see the form, the incarnation. The mind, the soul, the thought, the

life, in which all these adhere—that is absolutely inscrutable to us. But St. John says God has revealed Himself. He has chosen to come into our midst in visible, tangible shape. We behold His glory—the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But here comes the inevitable question: Was this a mere temporary manifestation? Did God's revelation of Himself in Christ begin and end on this earth? Was it a special and local form appearing and disappearing after thirty years? That is a difficulty which lies heavy on many minds. It seems inconceivable that God should thus issue into visibility only for a few moments in the midst of the eternal ages, and on this little earth, a mere speck amid the other vast, stupendous worlds of this infinite universe. What is John's answer? His answer is that that is not so, that the Logos, or Christ, who reveals God to us in time was with God from all eternity. In other words, God was never without self-expression, and the form of that self-expression was Christ. In Himself, in His own essential life, He has ever been invisible, and He must for ever be invisible. We have no eyes which can read unuttered thought or search the dark depths of another's consciousness. We cannot conceive of any finite intelligence that

would be capable of explaining the sanctuary of another's self. But John's doctrine is that He whom he calls the Word and who is known to us in history as Christ, was God's self-expression from all eternity. He was that other self which human philosophy has been trying in vain to find. That life manifested in time was the word or expression or uttered thought of God from all eternity. How this Logos, this Word of God, was the other self of God, how He was one with Him and yet objective to Him human thought can hardly fathom, and human language is inadequate to express. When we speak of another than self for God, we are entitled to add that we do not mean another self in the sense of a second personal God, but something which corresponds to another self in the case of finite creatures. An eternal and self-existent person must contain within himself what we can only find in other things outside ourselves, or He is imperfect, and therefore no God at all. Thus St. John solves the problem of the other self of God in the Christ who took fleshly form and dwelt among us. Before the Word was made flesh He was with God, and was God. That much may be said regarding the interrelations of the Godhead from the Godward side, and when we pass to contemplate the manifestation of God

from the manward side, all is clear and comforting. Christ is the effulgence of God, the very image and fulness of the Godhead for us. He is the Logos embodying for us the thought and spirit of God, as the spoken word embodies for us the thought and spirit of a man. He dwelt with God as form dwells with substance, as body dwells with soul, as the visible presentment of a man dwells with the man and is the man, and though this man is not merely what we see, yet we know him and can come to him in no other way. This is the significance of the words of our text. "The Lamb is the lamp thereof." In the Old Version it reads as if there were two lights in the City of God. It appears as if both Christ and God were light-givers. But the Revised Version sets that right. There is but one light—God, the supreme eternal source ; and there is but one which perfectly and fully gathers up that light and gives it forth—Jesus Christ. Just as light is invisible till it impinges on particles of matter, so God is absolutely invisible till He manifests Himself in Christ. Every beam of radiance from God in that eternal world will fall on us through the Lamb who is the lamp thereof. Now, let us see how far we have got. We have seen that a necessity of thought requires self and not-self. We have seen that must apply to God.

We have seen that the other self of God is Christ. We know what Christ is on earth. There is one word which sums up His life, the word whose evolution we have been following through these studies—the word “Lamb.” Christ is the Logos, or Word of God, and the central thought of that Word is, love, redemption, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. This gives a God who has not become a father in time, whose love has not developed or been created. It gives us a God whose essence is eternal love, whose nature is eternal fatherhood, and so away back in that prehistoric time the words of our text stand true, “The Lamb is the lamp thereof.” The eternal, the invisible, has never been solitary or alone. He has never been without expression, and that expression is all that we understand of Christ. Now, when we come into history, when we trace the revelation of this Eternal One in time, the same truth meets us. Here is its specialised form. Take this Old Testament. What are we to say of it? We are to say just what our text says—“The Lamb is the lamp thereof.” That is what I have been trying to show in all the preceding chapters. The Old Testament has absolutely no rational meaning unless in the light of a coming Christ. Its development runs along two main lines—

prophecy and law. Study these two, and they have neither sense nor reason unless they culminate in the Christ of the New Testament. Take prophecy, for instance. Follow the stream of prophecy down the centuries. It travails with the burden of a coming Messiah. It culminates in the vision of one who is led as a lamb to the slaughter. If these prophecies were not inspired by God and led forward to their fulfilment in Christ, they are mere pompous rhapsodies, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Or take law. This becomes still more inevitable. Read that elaborate ritual apart from the Lamb being the light thereof, and what is it? We do not hesitate to say (writes the late Archbishop Magee) that on this view these moral, and more especially these ceremonial, laws, with their blood-stained altars, their ruthless waste of animal life, their burdensome ritual of minute and useless ceremonies, their pompous priesthood, and awful penalties for the infraction of arbitrary rules—all these if conceived of as Divine and yet terminating in itself is most repulsive, and the most childish of human superstitions. But let the Lamb become the lamp thereof, and everything falls into order and rhythm. So again, when we come to the New Testament, the same thing is true. Read it apart from a

redeeming, sacrificial Christ, and the whole system of Christianity becomes an intolerable burden, a mere council of perfection. It is as far as man is concerned—

“Like the bird’s white wing above the hurrying river,  
We the white shadow that can reach it never.”

But look at it from the standpoint of St. John. Let the Lamb be the lamp thereof, and it becomes a glorious gospel of good news that sets music astir in the heart for ever. And when we go on beyond the present time on to the great consummation of things which is coming, on to the redeemed and eternal society and City of God, there again it will be in that sublime future as in the illimitable past. There again the Lamb will be the lamp thereof. The eternal, the infinite God will be all and in all. Yet He will be as He has ever been, invisible to the eyes even of the redeemed. We must beware of ever conceiving of God as having bodily form or limitations in space, or a sort of exalted king on a throne. God is spirit. God floods and fulfils everything as the luminiferous ether floods and fulfils space, but He dwelleth in light inaccessible and full of glory, which no man ever approaches to, or ever can. “The Lamb is the lamp thereof.” Yes, as Christ was the self-mani-



festation of God before the worlds were, so He was and is now in time the revelation of the eternal Father of men ; so in the City of God He will everlastingly remain so. As we have been drawn to God only through Him on earth, so shall we only see God through Him in heaven. As it has been from the beginning, is now, and shall be evermore, "The Lamb is the lamp thereof." All this surely puts the most serious emphasis on our closing thought. The thought is this: Man's supreme concern here and now must be Christ and his relation to Him. In Him the light of God is focussed. Through Him it sheds forth its rays. It has ever done so. It ever will do so. "The Lamb is the lamp thereof." Is it not clear, therefore, that if we are to know God, Christ must reveal Him. If we are to see God, it must be through Him. If we are to be enlightened and gladdened by the eternal radiance here and hereafter, Christ only is the way. It follows, therefore, that "we must account all loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Him." We must learn to love Him and serve Him, to grow familiar with Him, to open the heart and life to Him. This is the preparedness for membership in that eternal society which the glory of God doth lighten, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. Not to do this, is to put out the

eyes of our spiritual nature, is to miss the whole purpose of our life here and hereafter. Not to learn, and know, and love God's light which He has focussed in Christ, and which Christ radiates around us, is to accumulate the materials, and prepare the character for those awful words "Take ye the unprofitable servant, and cast him into the outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

## XXII

### THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE

#### REVELATION XXI. 27.

"There shall in no wise enter in save those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

WE began with the Lamb on the hillside. We saw the animal brought in under a higher significance. We saw it made a symbol of sublime religious truths. We saw the process by which this was accomplished. Then we saw the physical element being depressed, the animal slowly fading away into the background, then melting and merging into a man. We saw the shadow of this lamblike man haunting for generations the horizon of prophecy. Then we saw the shadow taking form, clothing itself in flesh and blood, and we were summoned at last to "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of

the world." Then, following the Lamb into the invisible, we prolonged our gaze away into eternity, into the abysmal deeps of God's personality. We found that Christ was God manifest, that in the Divine nature there has existed from all eternity a Lamb, a redeeming, sacrificial, loving element. This was only manifested in time in Christ, but before all time Christ was with God, and was God, and so the Lamb was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, to take away the sin of the world. Then we saw how, as following from this, that is the goal towards which all the ages are moving, the coronation of the Lamb, the exalting and enthroning of Christ in a regenerated universe. We saw some of the forces that are at work to bring about this issue, and at last we had a glimpse of its completion in the marriage of the Lamb, and the new society that emerges out of that event. And now we have come to the end, not because we have exhausted the subject, but because for one thing, we must not outstay our welcome while. Then cometh the end. I have selected these words here to close with. I do this because they give a personal turn to the conclusion. They press the whole of what I have been saying home for a judgment into the court of the individual conscience.

It is no mere intellectual study in which we have been engaged. It is no mere speculative question that we have been pursuing. It is no mere theological doctrine or disquisition far removed from the actual needs and necessity of the human soul. No, it is a matter that vitally concerns the eternal well-being of each of us. Our relation to the truth of these studies carries with it our life or our death. That is where I would like to end. I end by bringing you into the presence of two great issues that Scripture raises—the issue of life or the issue of death, and the necessity of coming to a decision on the point. That is where we start. We start with this “book of life.” It seems simple enough. Yet I have really found this subject to be the most difficult one of the whole course. Perhaps we shall get at the thought of this book by setting it in contrast with another. We have seen how frequent are the references to the ideal book or books all down Scripture. In the 20th chapter here you find the contrast clearly drawn out. There are “books,” and there is a “book.” “The books were opened.” Now, what are these books? They are the books of deeds not of names. If you will look up the reference through the Bible, you will find that this is the invariable meaning attaching to books when the word is

plural. The books of life therefore are the works, the deeds of life, and the books that are opened are, we may say, the books of conscience, of memory, of providence, of time—all, in fact, that have entered the formation of character. The judgment of a portion of mankind proceeded upon the revelation of these books, and that judgment is death. Now, what is the significance of that? The significance of that I take to be this. Since the entrance of sin into the world, and the advent of Christ, man can only occupy two possible relations to God. He must either stand in himself, or he must stand in Christ. If he stands in himself, then he elects to be judged by what our forefathers used to call the covenant of works. That is, he takes life in his own hands and says he will do the best he can and trust God for the rest. He does that notwithstanding that God proclaims in this book here that such a course is in direct opposition to the way that He has devised. I suppose we all know people who occupy such an attitude. They try to keep the moral law. They say to themselves, After all it does not so much matter what a man believes so long as he is serious, and sincere, and does the best he can. Well, if God had not spoken, if God had given no special revelation of His will or His way, that might be

right enough, but if He has, then it is the merest insolence of presumption not to give heed to Him.

Now, the whole assumption of this book here is that God has revealed Himself. This book is the record of the unfolding of God. It is the history of His entrance on the stage of time. It is the clear statement of the way that He has ordered to bring man into fellowship with Himself, and so to share His eternal life. This whole history is one long, passionate protest against the idea that it does not matter what a man believes so long as he is honest and does the best he can. It does not matter? What in the name of common sense, then, is the meaning of the life and death of Christ, and all these appeals for faith, of all the agonies and sufferings of His apostles, of John, and Paul, and the rest? Are they not all one persistent and pathetic protest against the madness of this idea, that it does not matter what a man believes, so long as he is honest and sincere?

Well now, this book, speaking in the name of God, says that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified, that the man who elects to be judged according to what he has done goes up before God's throne on his own merits, and the issue of that must be death. All have sinned. "There is no difference," says St. Paul, no difference,

and the wages of sin is death. That is not a penalty. It is a consequence. It follows naturally and of necessity. That is the significance of the opening of the books recorded here. It is a picture of the issue that awaits the life which advances to meet God save in God's own revealed way, which advances to meet Him, trusting either in its own righteousness or in the Divine mercy, or in both. But there is another book. It is the book not of deeds, but of names. It is the Lamb's book of life. What does that mean? I have said that a man may go to meet God by the way of the law, or the way of the gospel—the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, as we saw, was the ground of the creation. He undertook the responsibility for him. Had man not sinned the type of life which Christ manifested would have been his, but man sinned and fell, and death followed: But Christ, who had undertaken the responsibility of the creation, now undertakes its salvation, and the method by which He accomplished that we have seen. He, therefore, is the way out from death, out into this Divine and eternal life. That is the reiterated teaching of this book. All who receive Him, who yield themselves to Him, who cease to stand in themselves, and determine to stand in Him, these, and only these, pass out from under



the law of sin and death. They are taken up into union with Christ. All His is theirs, and all theirs is His. They are not judged out of the books, for they know that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. They are well aware—

“No hope can on the law be built  
Of justifying grace,  
The law that shows the sinner's guilt  
Condemns him to his face.”

They have learned that if righteousness come by the law, then Christ has died in vain. His entire life, and passion, and suffering is a ghastly and irrational waste. Therefore they have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. They have realised that the whole will of God is summed up in taking Christ and Christ only as the way to the Father. They understand the significance of His answer to the Pharisees when they asked Him, “What must we do that we may work the works of God?” “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” But observe this: it is Christ in His relation to human sin. It is Christ as the Lamb that is, the Redeemer, the sacrificial victim. It is the acceptance of Christ in this office that finally determines our admission or non-admission into eternal life.

For mark, it is only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life who have a right to enter in through the gates. That is, it is only those who accept Christ as expressed in the Lamb—in other words, as their sacrifice and their substitute. It is these only who enter the New Jerusalem. Every one else is without the gates.

Notice next the privileges of those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. They are numerous and wonderful. I only mention two, and I mention these two because they will throw further light on what I have just been urging. The first privilege is that they do not come into judgment at all. Does that seem an unwarranted statement? It is Christ who makes it. Listen to what He says. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and cometh not into judgment." Again, on an earlier day He told Nicodemus, "He that believeth on Me is not judged." That is to say, the believer's privilege is to be set free from judgment, from final judgment. How can that be? Two considerations will help to make it clear. First, faith withdraws a man from future judgment, because it makes judgment a present, daily process. When a man really accepts Christ in all His offices, that acceptance

carries with it a continual inward judgment. It brings to light and condemns everything during his lifetime to a moral judgment, which shall not take place for unbelievers till the last day. It sets the believer free from a final judgment, because it puts into operation a constant and daily anticipation of it. That is one reason. There is a second. Faith unites the soul to Christ. Christ and the believer become one. They become one as the branch is one with the tree, as the body is one with the head. The believers pass through every experience of Christ. They share His peace. They die with Him. They suffer with Him. They rise with Him. They sit with Him in heavenly places. But there is one thing to which Christ is not subject. He is not subject to judgment. Neither are the believers in Him. Their acceptance of Him is their judgment. It declares what they are. They stand before His judgment throne, but they stand not to be judged, only to be made manifest.

"Then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of My Father." They shall take their places with Christ in the judgment of the world. On the other hand, those who are outside Christ, for them the books will be opened. They shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body. Such judgment issues in condemnation. It issues

in condemnation because it has been a repudiation of God's way of salvation. That is one of the privileges of having the name written in the Lamb's book of life. Those who have shall not come into judgment. The only other I shall mention is this : Life. Life in all its fulness and perfection. Life ! that is the secret of the universe, that is the goal to which it aspires. All the long ages of striving and struggling have been in the interests of life. The whole effort of man to-day in every shape and form may be expressed as an effort to find life and life more abundantly. Well, this book says there is but one way to life. It is Christ. "If you believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins." Let us not belittle heaven. Let us not get lost amid its harps, and musics, and green fields, and golden streets. What is heaven? It is life. It is life in all its breadth, and length, and depth, and height. It is life freed from all that cramps, and stings, and worries, and annoys. It is life in all its sweetness, and fulness, and harmony, and power, and endurance. It is life for evermore. And Jesus is the way to that life. God has designed that man's nature and his universe shall be summed up in Christ, that faith in Him and Him only gets the names enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, and gives a right to enter through the gates into the City.

That is the assumption on which this whole revelation proceeds. And so this is the conclusion of the whole matter—life or death. Have we made choice? Do we stand in that Christ, or do we stand out? There are but the two relations. There can be no neutrality. In moral things neutrality is indeed the worst sort of choice. Now, there come critical hours when the choice is offered to us with solemn emphasis. There are in every sphere of life—in business, in commerce, in music, in art, in study—opportunities which come, and if we miss them then, we miss them for ever. There are tides in the affairs of man which, taken at the flood, lead on to fortune, but which let slip—

“There follow a mist and weeping rain,  
And life is never the same again.”

Shall we not say that such an opportunity is the close of a series of studies such as we end here? It bids us all make our calling and election sure. It summons us out from indifference and neutrality. It urges us to determine on what side we are ranked. Beyond all question, this book, the Bible, knows nothing save two classes of men in the world—the saved and the unsaved, those who have entered into life, and those who have made a league with death, those on the right hand or

those on the left. All who stand outside Christ are heading for the goal of death—death temporal and death eternal. What that means it is impossible for us to express in words, but that it means something so awful that it should shake the whole soul with terror, no one who reads these sayings about the “worm that never dieth, and the fire that is not quenched” can for a moment doubt. Do we turn in revolt against this wild dogmatism of such assertions? Why should we? Is the tree cruel if it says to the branch, except ye abide in me, ye shall die? Or the sun a monster when it says to the spring world, except ye open to me, ye shall have no life in you? Is that an arbitrary penalty that the tree imposes on the branch, or the sun upon the seeds and blossoms of the spring earth? No, it is merely the statement of a necessary law, a law made necessary by the conditions of their creation. And God, when He sends Christ, says to us through Him, Here is life for you, here is the only way to life—life in its fulness, and strength, and power. To turn aside from Him, to refuse to abide in Him, to take our own way, that is death—death temporal, death spiritual, death eternal. Why should we object to that? Why should we call that arbitrary and dogmatic in the spiritual world, and refuse to call the very same

things arbitrary and dogmatic in the natural world? If it is true, then it is a tremendous and an awful truth. If it is true, it is a stupendous crime to keep silence about it. If it is true, it ought to be proclaimed with thunders and lightning, and the noise of a tempest, and the sound of words—words fierce as life, sweet as music, and imperious as the stepping storm. And that is just what we have here. Either this book with all this wonderful history of the Evolution and Coronation of the Lamb is true, or false. If it is true, it is the most solemn and wonderful truth that has ever reached the ears of dying men. If it is not true, it is the most stupendous fraud in the history of the world. Ah, but it is not that. "See that you refuse not Him who speaks." Believe the ancient words, "There shall in no wise enter into it save those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life"; and what matters where or what your names or mine may be if they are not in the Book of Life?

UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED, PRINTERS, WOKING AND LONDON.

GEN. THOS. STANBURY  
LIBRARY  
NEW YORK





YOUNG FOLKS' ILLUSTRATED EDITION.

*Cloth, 1s. 6d., 2s. 6d., and 3s. 6d. Sixty-Eighth Thousand.*

# THE STORY OF JOHN G. PATON

TOLD FOR YOUNG FOLKS.

By the REV. JAMES PATON, D.D.

With Map and Seven Illustrations by J. FINNEMORE.

The *Daily Telegraph* says : " In the record of thirty years' good work amongst the South Sea cannibals, we have before us one of those missionary enterprises which read almost more strangely than fiction itself. . . . There are enough hairbreadth escapes and deeds of cool—if unostentatious—courage in these pages to stock half a dozen ordinary books, and the graphic illustrations add much to the attraction of the text."

" The book of the year for young folks."—*British Weekly*.

" A remarkable and interesting biography."—*Guardian*.

" In all the history of missionary work, there is no finer narrative than the story of John G. Paton, which is told by his brother in the handsome volume before us. It is a great romance of the South Seas, as well as a record of a noble life."  
*World.*

" Paton's autobiography is one of the most notable records we have of missionary enterprise, and it was, decidedly, a happy thought to bring out this version of it for the benefit of young readers."—*St. James's Gazette*.

" Here is a book of adventure—adventure in real life—which it would not be easy to match in fiction. ' Thirty Years Among South Sea Cannibals ' is the descriptive sub-title ; but what the story really is, how full of thrilling incident, and what sort of man the hero, can only be realised by actual acquaintance. It would be difficult to find as admirable a present for a young reader as this volume. A boy must be better for reading of such courage and devotion."—*Spectator*.

LONDON : HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW.

*Second Edition. Crown 8vo, Cloth, 1s. 6d.*

# BEAUTIFUL CHARACTERS:

OR

## TYPES OF VICTORY

By the REV. JAMES PATON, D.D.

EXTRACTS FROM PRESS NOTICES.

"A pleasant little book. . . . The stories are Scottish idylls, and they are written from life. They give in an attractive form the experiences of a man with the true pastoral heart and eye. . . . We like his book."—*British Weekly*.

"The literary setting of the sketches is worthy of the author ; but the main interest of the book is in the characters portrayed. We hardly needed him to tell us that the likenesses are drawn from the life ; they bear that evidence in themselves. The reader will not readily lay down the book when he has begun it. In the sketches the facts speak for themselves, and show most strikingly the power of the Christian faith."

*Glasgow Daily Mail.*

"That Dr. Paton is a literary artist, no reader of this edition of his missionary brother's autobiography will ever doubt. He tells us that these beautiful characters have all been drawn from real life, but the names are, of course, fictitious. They are very well drawn, and nothing can come of them but good to the reader. Behind them all are deep meanings and fine teaching."

*Methodist Times.*

"This is a really delightful collection of incidents, descriptive of Scottish life and character. It is, in fact, a gallery of word paintings, clear, forcible, natural, bringing before us the deep-soul experience of Scottish peasant life."—*English Churchman*.

LONDON : HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW.

FOURTH EDITION. COMPLETING THE EIGHTH  
THOUSAND.

*With Portrait, Map, and 23 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, Cloth, 6s.*

# LETTERS AND SKETCHES

FROM THE

## NEW HEBRIDES

By M. WHITECROSS PATON, of Aniwa.

Edited by her Brother-in-Law, Rev. JAMES PATON, D.D.

"These 'Letters and Sketches' are well described as 'supplementary and illuminative' of that most interesting of missionary records, 'The Autobiography of John G. Paton.' Delightful it is, nothing less, so great is the naive charm with which Mrs. Paton writes."—*Spectator*.

"A very attractive piece of missionary literature, full of vivid description of nature and life."—*Times*.

"A series of simple and charming letters."—*Saturday Review*.

"If Mrs. Paton's letters do not find as wide a circulation as her husband's narrative, it is not because they do not deserve it. They are quite as graphic, and reveal even more of the inner life of the savage and Christian community of Aniwa. The simplicity and unconscious courage exhibited by Mrs. Paton is nothing short of splendid. These letters deserve to be placed among the archives and monuments of missionary enterprise. A serviceable map and a few illustrations increase the value of the book."—*British Weekly*.

"The volume is indeed, as the editor says, 'supplementary and illuminative' of thrilling scenes familiar to the readers of the 'Autobiography'; while it dwells upon incidents of a kind which the venerable missionary would scarcely have thought worth while alluding to, and yet these sometimes possess a fascination equal almost to anything Dr. Paton has to tell."

*Scotsman.*

"The perfection of naturalness and unstudied grace and liveliness. . . . There is not a dull page in the whole book."

*Glasgow Herald.*

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW.

POPULAR EDITION COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

*Twenty-fourth Thousand. Crown 8vo, Cloth, 6s.*

JOHN G. PATON, D.D.,

MISSIONARY TO THE NEW HEBRIDES.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

Edited by his Brother, the Rev. JAMES PATON, D.D.

With Portrait and Map.

EXTRACTS FROM PRESS NOTICES.

"Dr. Paton's book is one of the best autobiographies we have ever read."—*Daily Chronicle*.

"We have never had the pleasure of turning over the pages of any work, since we were privileged in early boyhood to read of Robert Moffat's early efforts among the Bechuanas, which has seemed to us more full of inspiration for all who desire to see the Kingdom of God established upon earth. Every missionary speaker would do well to acquaint himself with the incidents of this wonderful life."—*Review of the Churches*.

"This deeply interesting autobiography."—*N. B. Daily Mail*.

"For lyric flow of feeling and graphic narrative, as well as for thrilling incident and the natural unfolding of a little segment of the great Divine plan, infinitely transcending the sublimest plot of any literary artist, this autobiography stands unrivalled."

*United Presbyterian Missionary Record.*

"A book which will bring lasting pleasure to many homes."

*Methodist Recorder.*

Dr. T. L. CUYLER says: "I have just laid down the most robust and the most fascinating piece of autobiography that I have met with in many a day. It is the story of the wonderful work wrought by John G. Paton, the famous missionary to the New Hebrides; he is made of the same stuff with Livingstone. A book which is as thrilling as any romance."

The Rev. Dr. PIERSON, author of *The Crisis of Missions*, says: "I consider it *unsurpassed* in missionary biography. In the whole course of my extensive reading on these topics, a more stimulating, inspiring, and every way first-class book has not fallen into my hands. Everybody ought to read it."

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW



76

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

47140

252Q  
W117

AUTHOR Waddell R.

TITLE Behold the Lamb of God, A  
series of discourses.....

252Q  
W117

47140



